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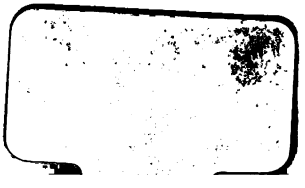

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BLANCHE, QUEEN OF CASTILE.

BLANCHE, QUEEN OF CASTILE.

BLANCHE,

QUEEN OF CASTILE,

A POEM,

BY

RONDA.

LONDON:
THOMAS HOOKHAM
(Formerly of 15, Old Bond Street),
5A, LITTLE RUSSELL STREET, BLOOMSBURY.

1883

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PREFACE.

IN the history of the Middle Ages, instances but too frequently occur of cruelty and oppression; it would, however, be difficult, even during that period, to find one where the victim was so blameless and her fate so dark as that of the unfortunate Blanche, Queen of Castile.

The romantic incidents of her short but eventful life appeared to be well suited to a poem. It required the pen of Scott himself to do justice to the subject; but the deep interest of her story, and the world-wide sympathy that must be felt for her tragic fate, will perhaps secure for the following romance more attention than it could

otherwise have hoped to obtain; and if over one page an eye shall glisten—

> "Or if one heart throb higher at its sway,
> The wizard note has not been touched in vain."

It has been well observed by Southey that "the power of story is strikingly exemplified in the Italian heroic poets; they please universally even in translations, when little but the story remains." Believing, as the author does, that in any work of art—especially a Poem—simplicity is preferable to obscurity, he has attempted to imitate the measure adopted by one of the greatest of modern bards, remarkable for his clear, manly, and healthy poetry*—and which measure he has termed the "romantic stanza," adding, that "it

* Sir Walter Scott.

appears so natural to our language, that the very best of our poets have not been able to protract it into the verse properly called heroic, without the use of epithets which are, to say the least, unnecessary."* The gifted author of the "Lays of Ancient Rome" † has acknowledged his obligations to the same illustrious bard, whom he terms "the great restorer of our ballad poetry, who united to the fire of a great poet the minute curiosity and patient diligence of a great antiquary"; and even Scott himself had imitated the metre of a still greater genius than his own, and frankly admitted—"It is to Mr. Coleridge that I am bound to make the acknowledgment due from the pupil to his master."‡

* Introduction to "The Lay of the Last Minstrel."

† Lord Macaulay.

‡ Introduction to "The Lay of the Last Minstrel."

But the author of this poem hopes that what Sir William Jones has said of Horace will not apply to him, that "he not only imitated the measures of the Greek poets, but even translated almost word for word the brightest passages of Alcæus, Anacreon, and others."*

In reference to the power and charm of "Ballad Poetry," Valerius Maximus observes, that "the ancient Roman ballads were probably of more benefit to the young than all the lectures of the Athenian schools, and that to the influence of the national poetry were to be ascribed the virtues of such men as Camillus and Fabricius."†

* See "Essay on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations."

† Preface to "Lays of Ancient Rome."

DON PEDRO, EL CRUEL, King of Castile.

BLANCHE OF BOURBON, his Queen.

DOÑA MARIA DE PADILLA, Mistress of Don Pedro.

DOÑA LEONORA, Dowager Queen of Aragon.

DON HENRÍQUE, Count of Trastamara.

DON FADRÍQUE, Master of Santiago.

DON JUAN ALONSO DE ALBUQUERQUE, Grand Chancellor.

DON PERO GOMEZ GUDIEL, Bishop of Segovia.

AIMERI, Viscount of Narbonne.

BERTRAND DU GUESCLIN, French Knight.

IÑIGO ORTIZ D'ESTUNIGA, Governor of Xerez.

JUAN PEREZ DE REBOLLEDO, Assassin.

BLANCHE, QUEEN OF CASTILE.

CANTO I.

IN the far west no longer now
Is seen the deep and fiery glow,
The splendours bright in living light
That blazed along the sky;
The clouds on clouds of Alpine height,
Like silent glaciers snowy white,
That sparkled with celestial light,
No longer charm the eye;
All—all dissolving, melt away,
Slow fading with the last faint ray

Of day's departing sun.
The isles enchanting, golden sea,
Spread 'neath the azure canopy—
All vanished; the last lingering trace
Eve's deep'ning shadows slow efface,
The magic light to night gives place,
The dazzling scene is gone.
The distant hills are lost to view;
Upon the loftiest mountain blue
No rays still lingering shine;
The ethereal dyes, the purple hue,
The tints that o'er the landscape threw
A radiance divine,
Have flown, and silent winged their way
To skies where, 'neath the eternal ray,
By orb celestial shed,
The Beautiful fades not away,
But living blooms, and round the Throne
Where night and darkness are unknown,
Her mystic glories spread;

Innumerable souls with rapture gaze,
Lips countless, hymning the Creator's praise
By choir seraphic led.

Glimmered the silent stars on high,
And moaned the gusty night wind by,
While storm clouds, gathering dun,
Now veil, now rapid give to sight
The moon's cold orb and silvery light,
Calm rising with the shades of night
Her destined course to run.
In the lone vale 'neath barren steep,
Far winding, rapid, calm, and deep,
Pisuerga's clay-tinged waters sweep;
While oft upon the turbid stream
A transitory silver gleam
From the pale planet shone.

The cold north blast now colder blew,
While indistinct each object grew,
And more obscure the way;

But glimmering lights in turrets seen
Told where, the barren hills between,
Fair Valladolid lay.[1]
Slow winding o'er the dusky plain,
Anxious the welcome town to gain
Ere night o'ertook their weary train,
A cavalcade appeared;
In coat of steel and tabard green
A herald far ahead was seen,
Till sudden drawing rein—
The clarion's blast, heard ringing clear
Through hills afar and turrets near,
Is echoing again—again.

The warder caught the startling sound,
While faint reverberating round
It slowly died away,
The massive gates wide open thrown,
The narrow bridge came trembling
down,

O'er which, slow pacing one by one,
Each horseman wound his way.
No guard or archer paused to inquire
What gallant knight or trusty squire
Admission sought to gain;
All knew the blast so shrilly blown,
To each armed sentinel 'twas known
Whence came the lordly train.
Loud were the shouts of welcome heard,
As through the portal, onward spurred,
Each noble charger came in sight,
Rider in armour flashing bright,
Whose golden helm and waving plume,
Costly mail and grand costume,
Proclaimed his lineage high;
From steel cuirass and morions bright
Glanced back the torches' flickering light,
And dazzled every eye.
The clanking arms, the warlike sound,
The heavy tramp upon the ground,

The constant tread of rapid feet,
The echo through the narrow street,
The countless voices' ceaseless hum,
Now bursting forth as on they come
In one long thrilling cheer,
Brought every inmate forth to see
What the strange sight and noise might be;
And while the brave shout loud with glee,
The timid quake with fear.
The gathering crowd closed all around,
The horsemen scarce a passage found,
So dense the living mass;
Pursuivants gently urged the throng
Through the close street to move along,
And let the pageant pass.

Amid that troop of armèd men
Rode one so young and fair,
That all who saw turned round again
On that bright face to stare.

The eager youth, the aged man,
The women young and old,
All hurried on—the children ran,
Her beauty to behold.

Though o'er the pale and placid face
No shade of colour came,
The lovely features all could trace,
The symmetry of frame.
Around her neck rich auburn hair
In massive ringlets flowed,
Glistering in the torches' glare
As gracefully she bowed.
Exhausted by the weary way,
Chilled by the wintry breeze,
Still languidly the smile would play
Round eyes that strove to please.
From her tired hand the broidered rein
Drooped 'neath the well-decked flowing
mane;

Rich was her dark embroidered garb,
Costly the trappings of her barb.
With pride and joy all hearts beat high—
Not one who viewed that dark blue eye
But owned the secret charm;
No knight or sturdy burgher there
But felt for one so young and fair
There was no deed he would not dare
To screen from earthly harm.

Can brightest star in heaven by night,
With not a cloud to dim—
Can purest beam of dazzling light
From earth's most precious gem,
Compare with beauty's heavenly ray
From nature's faultless face,
Or can the heart's wild feelings sway,
And rapture to the soul convey,
Like youth's enchanting grace?

A stately warrior known to fame
On with the lovely rider came;
In gorgeous mail and helm arrayed,
He led the brilliant cavalcade.
Among the magnates of the land,
Fitted for trust and high command,
No chieftain more renown had gained,
More gallant deeds had done;
High on the blazoned roll of fame,
For stainless honour none could claim
In peace or war a prouder name
Than Viscount of Narbonne,[2]
A soul no tyrant could enslave,
Scorn of the vile and mean,
A nature noble—gentle—brave—
Stamped on the brow were seen.
On his right arm the red cross shone,
Borne in a cause Divine,
On fields afar by warriors won,
To gain a Saviour's shrine.[3]

Selected by his Sovereign's grace
To fill the high and honoured place
Of guardian to his lovely niece,
Of Bourbon's Royal line.[4]
Though deep in thought he silent rode,
His pensive eyes with pleasure glowed,
And throbbed his heart with pride,
When, 'mid the dense crowd cheering wild,
He frequent turned and fondly smiled
On her who rode beside.
No tender father's heart did e'er
Evince more holy love and care
For a fair daughter's weal;
No daughter to a parent dear
More gratitude could feel.

Though age and toil had blanched the hair,
And furrowed deep the brow with care,
The vigour of his ardent mind
Stood unimpaired; no eye could find

Aught that bespoke the dull decay
That saps the intellectual ray—
That fatal blight that o'er us flings
The gloomy shadow of its wings,
Where dimly thro' the glimmering light
We see approach the darker night
That quenches the ethereal flame,
Nought leaving but a clay-cold frame
To sink to dust from whence it came.
The jealous Spaniard e'en confessed
No finer form, no braver breast,
Had ever worn a knightly crest.
His costly mail, from Lubeck brought,
By skilful German hand was wrought;[5]
The burnished helm and tempered shield
Had served him well on many a field;
On the bright steel the observing eye
The dinted marks could still descry,
Where battle-axe and flashing blade
Their deadly blows full oft had made—

Rude traces of the desperate strife
Where each strong arm fought hard for life.
Graceful he rode, his coal-black steed
Trod proudly on the ground,
And as he passed, all men agreed
A chief so fit in hour of need
The squadron's fiery charge to lead
Could be but rarely found.

Renowned through Europe, loved in France
For their illustrious career,
Twelve gallant knights now slow advance
With martial pomp, and close the rear,
Some clad in hauberks,[6] hoods of steel—
Linked mail their sole attire—
Each well-tried lance of Bordeaux steel[7]
Borne by a faithful squire;
The splendid scarves of ample fold,
In which the rest appear,

The gorgets bright inlaid with gold,
The golden helms they wear,
The wealth and rank and order told
Of each proud knight and peer.[8]

Arrived before the palace gate,
The weary troop impatient wait;
Still wildly cheered the surging crowd,
While neighed the leader's charger loud,
Tossing his raven mane.
The silver trumpet's long loud swell
The Royal warder knew full well
Announced the coming train;
The ponderous gates, in haste unbarred,
On grating hinge aloud they jarred,
As slowly back they swung;
Then, bursting through the gloomy arch,
A blaze of light from flaring torch
Its dazzling lustre flung.

Marshalled within the spacious yard,
For ready welcome stood prepared
Heralds and yeomen of the guard,
And squires, a brilliant train ;
Conspicuous 'mid the joyous scene
Stood Aragon's belovèd Queen,[9]
Around whose graceful form was seen
The chivalry of Spain.

From trumpet's blast and armour's clang
Through court and hall the echo rang,
As, drawing rein, each stately knight
Did from his weary steed alight ;
And, as the gates they close,
From the dense crowd that stood without,
The hearty cheer and deafening shout
Again—again arose.
"Welcome, dearest Blanca, welcome!"
From thrilling voice like music came ;

"To our ancient palace welcome!"
From every lip the welcome came:
"Welcome to our Royal city,
Enter these her honoured halls;
Hark, loyal hearts loud proclaim thee,
Her youthful Queen Castilla calls."

The noise has ceased, the clarion shrill
Has hushed its silver sound;
The crowd is gone, and all is still,
Save where the lonely sentinel
Slow pacing treads his round.
Within her silent chamber now,
Her last attendant gone,
Blanche, weary, sat with throbbing brow,
Pale, pensive, and alone.
Why frequent does the limpid tear
Start glistening in her eye?
Why anxious does she thus appear
The gushing fount to dry?

To stanch each welling drop she tried
That trickled from its cell;
But ere the moistened hand had dried,
Another silent fell.
Struggling with her inward feeling,
'Tween grief and wounded pride;
Striving the weakness o'er her stealing
Even from herself to hide.

"What can this mean? what has occurred
To make him break his promised word,
My trusting heart deceive?
Not e'en a message have I heard,
My terrors to relieve;
To tell me that, by cruel fate
Detained against his will,
Illness, or grave affairs of state,
Compelled him for a time to wait
His promise to fulfil,

But that impatient he would soon
His truth and honour prove,
For absence and neglect atone
By his devoted love.
Was it too much for one so young,
Whose every hope on earth now hung
On him who had besought her hand,
For whom she left her native land,
Her home, friends kind, and parents dear—
Away, away thou foolish tear!—
Was it too much to think that he
Was waiting anxiously to see
The object of his own free choice,
To grasp her hand, to hear her voice?
Amid the gay and joyful throng,
How did my throbbing bosom long
To see the form that must for me
Soon fix my earthly destiny!
When ceaseless from the exulting crowd
Came the kind welcome ringing loud,

That made my grateful heart rejoice—
How fondly did I think one voice
Would in thrilling accents greet me,
Eyes with kindling glances meet me!
Oh, how did my attentive ear
Long from his lips my name to hear!
Must I, about to be a queen,
Forget how joyous I have been,
All gladness from the mind efface,
From memory all the past erase;
Stifle every feeling of my heart,
Look happy—*act* a heartless part;
My very nature change, and seem
What I am not—my life a dream,
Mocking my senses with a show
Of happiness I never know?
No, no—this cannot be! I will,
I must believe that he is still
The being I have pictured—kind,
Brave, gentle, with a noble mind.

He cannot thus my heart deceive;
That he is false I'll not believe,—
No, never—never! Yet, oh why
This terrible anxiety?

"When Leonora warmly took
My hand, and saw my anxious look,
Why sudden drooped her pensive eye?
Why did she try to check the sigh,
As if she dreaded to betray
Some thought within her breast that lay?
Turn pale, and tremulous inquire
About dear France—my patience tire
With questions asked again—again,
Then earnest strive to heal the pain
She saw I strove to mask in vain?
My God! my God! what can this mean!
The truth, the truth, how shall I glean?
I see a cloud that bodes me ill;
Peace—peace—my throbbing heart, be still!"

Distracted, from her seat she rose;
Her restless brain with fever glows;
The blood as through her veins it flows
Felt like a rushing flame.
To calm the mind she strove in vain,
But one short hour's repose to gain
For her exhausted frame.
Meekly she raised her eyes, and prayed
That He who hearts for suff'ring made,
In pity now would grant His aid
Her burning thoughts to tame.
Then faint, slow sinking on her bed,
She tried to still the throbbing head;
Of home and distant scenes she thought,
Her wandering fancy visions brought
Of days when every hour seemed fraught
With some bright golden dream;
And joys in happy girlhood sought
On pleasure's sparkling stream,

Till to the wildered brain o'erwrought
A placid slumber came.

Sleep on! ah, happy if thy ills were past,
And that calm sleep now o'er thee were thy last;
Thrice happy if in heaven thou couldst awake,
Spared the dark cup thy lip must silent take;
Sleep the calm sleep that lures thee for awhile
With dreams that still thy fancy can beguile,
And thy pale face illumine with a smile.
Rest while thou may'st; too soon, alas! thou'lt know
The loss of peace, the bitterness of woe,
How deeply dark the stream of life can flow;
Too soon that bosom, now so calm, must feel
Sorrows no joy, no time can ever heal;
O'er thy young heart must pass the with'ring blast
That leaves no verdure where it once hath passed;
In vain will fall the spring's refreshing shower,
Reviving all things but the bruisèd flower.

Rude hands have plucked thee from thy native soil,
Hands that no more by tenderness will spoil;
Transplanted to a strange and deadly clime,
Thou'rt doomed to fade away before thy time,
Thy bloom to change for dust in life's glad prime;
The scorn that withers, the neglect that chills,
The wrongs that crush, the tyranny that kills,
All wait to goad and lacerate in turn,
To bear each shock thy gentle breast must learn;
Till, drained the cup assigned thee for thy share,
Thy Heavenly Father takes thee to His care.

CANTO II.

MORN broke on tranquil Sagra's vale,[10]
And softly sigh'd the vernal gale;
Fresh from the western hills it blew,
Shook from the leaf the sparkling dew;
The spangled grass and wild flower sweet
Waited the grateful kiss to meet,
Fluttered with joy when soft it came,
Sigh'd as it pass'd fresh sweets to claim.
Away it speeds with rapid wing
O'er meadows bright with glorious spring,
To dells where groves with music ring;
Through lonely glades it sweeps along,
Gladdens and swells the tide of song,
Makes doubly clear the trilling notes
Gushing from joyful warblers' throats,

Bears swift from sweetly-cooing dove
To list'ning mate soft notes of love;
Now far it woos the verdant plain,
Revels in waves of rustling grain,
Wakens the lark to welcome day,
And wafts afar the thrilling lay,
On—on through silent space, to where
The golden gates of day appear;
Through portals open swift as light,
O'er fields ethereal wings its flight,
O'er flowers unfading, fresh and bright,
Blossoms of amaranth's purple hue
Spangled with gems of fragrant dew,
Laden with odours on it flew,
Till bright Aurora's list'ning ear
Thro' her radiant halls—now echoing clear—
The wild enchanting notes can hear.

In the deep blue and tranquil sky
The golden clouds are floating high;

All motionless—they seem to be
Bright islands in a distant sea,
From darkness and from tempests free,
Where noiseless tides without a wave
The peaceful shores are seen to lave.
On the dark cliff that crowned the flood
Toledo's ancient bulwarks stood ; [11]
The massive walls and turrets grey
Had caught the kindling eastern ray
That softly glow'd on rock and bower,
And pierced with light the gloomy tower,
While far upon the plain below
Rock, tower, and spire their shadows throw.

Not here does golden Tagus wide
Majestic roll his placid tide:
The tranquil stream that broad and deep
Its stately course was seen to keep,
Through winding banks of emerald green,
With face as crystal bright,

Where as in polished glass was seen
Reflected clear heav'n's blue serene,
In narrow channel sudden pent,
'Tween granite rocks by earthquake rent,
Driven to prove his might,
Is heard afar, roaring loud
Like cataract through misty shroud,
Or thunder in a distant cloud
Riven by forkèd light;
There rushing with resistless sway,
Dashing aloft the blinding spray,
Restless, angry, foaming, raging—
A never-vanquished foe engaging,
But vengeful war incessant waging—
Where frowns the dark stupendous wall,
Like giant's castle grim and tall,
With craggy battlements on high
That storm and time and war defy,
There swift the seething waters flow,
There ceaseless toil like subtle foe,

The solid structure mining slow,
Baffled long, but working still:
Patience, time, and stubborn will,
Supply the miner's want of skill.
Beneath the granite's rugged steep,
Ripple the waves that never sleep,
While deeper, deeper, slow they creep;
In dripping cave now loud they roar,
Wild surges sweep the crumbling floor;
Increasing still in bulk and weight,
They lash the rock with all their might;
From cracking roof and shattered wall
With thund'ring crash vast fragments fall;
In the choked bed now mounting high,
The ruins piled on ruins lie;
Upheaved the waters hiss and boil,
To move the mass they ceaseless toil;
Broken awhile they eddy round,
And vent their rage in foam and sound;

Sudden their powers they all unite,
Rush headlong with resistless might;
Huge boulders, stones, and jagged rock,
Whirled downward by the impetuous shock,
Now rapid disappear;
Then dashing onward fierce and strong
The foaming torrent sweeps along
In channel deep and clear.

Hark to the distant trilling note
Through the calm air now heard to float;
List! sweetly sounds the silver horn,
Echoing in the stilly morn.
Far up the vale a group is seen
Gathering on the dewy green;
Some, pausing, strain the half-closed eye,
To gaze upon the dazzling sky,
Intently watching where the bird,
A solitary speck, appeared,

While circling still, away, away,
He soars to find his destined prey ;
Scarce seen, he wings his daring flight,
Full at the blazing sun's fierce light
Defiant darts his piercing sight ;
Scared by his look and presence dread,
The feathery tribes have timely fled ;
In silent space seen dark and lone,
The wide domain seems all his own.
Now steady poised, with rapid glance
His keen eye sweeps the blue expanse,
And marks afar the hern advance,
As sailing slow with stately swing
He makes his warning trumpet ring.
Joyful the falcon hears the sound,
And higher springs with sudden bound,
Wings shivering, contracted claws,
And now, a momentary pause
For aim unerring, then a stoop—
And down he comes with lightning swoop ;

Fluttering wild both reach the ground,
Where amid feathers scattered round
The bleeding hern is lifeless found.

Hark ! hark ! again the bugle's heard
Through the calm vale resound,
At two gay riders who appeared
All eyes are glancing round ;
Across the mead their coursers flew,
Their fetlocks dripping with the dew
As swiftly on they bound.
Each mounted on a fiery steed
From Andalucia's purest breed,
No purer could be found ;
Right well and gracefully they ride,
While, heads outstretched and nostrils wide,
The gallant steeds rush on.
With keen delight one rider there
Inhaled the morn's delicious air,
His sparkling eyes devoid of care

With health's bright lustre shone.
The breezy knoll they now have gained,
Where both the panting steeds are rein'd,
Tossing their heads on high.

With circling hoop a maiden stood,
Where perched each hawk with bells and hood
All ready waits to fly;
And while the riders gaily talk,
Careful the maid unhoods a hawk,
Then quick at the command
Unchains the legs and lets it fly
To him—who puts it gracefully
On his fair partner's hand.
Well pleased the bird inclines his ear,
And bends as if he strove to hear
What his admirers say,
Expands his wings, looks keen around,
And to the horn's melodious sound
Joyful he soars away.

The lofty mien, commanding tone,
The glittering chain around him thrown,
The graceful cap, the snow-white plume,
Bright flowing scarf and rich costume,
The gold brocaded gorgeous vest
That mantled o'er his haughty breast,
The costly trappings of his steed,
The matchless beauty of the breed,
All told the princely rank of one
Of those two riders who had flown
With thrilling joy and lightning speed
Thus suddenly across the mead.
But not the fleet and fiery barb,
The gorgeous chain, the costly garb,
Not all that show of regal wealth
Or the deep glow of manly health
Could mask from the observer's view
The gloomy shade, the varying hue,
That o'er his lowering features passed,
The fiery glance that round he cast

If aught displeased the haughty soul
That never knew or brooked control.
Who closely scanned that strong-marked face
The darkest passions there might trace;
Every stain that can disgrace
Man's moral nature, could in turn
Upon that stern brow guilty burn.
Cruelty, perfidy lurked there,
That made e'en innocence despair;
Soft woman's sex, youth's tender age,
Trembled alike to incur his rage.
Like baleful meteor in the sky
Flashed the wild fury in his eye
On him who dared his will defy.
Vain was submission to disarm
That vengeful spirit, or from harm
To save the object of his ire;
No sanctuary, from desire
That demoniac thoughts inspire,

The pure and innocent could screen
Whose fatal beauty he had seen;
Treach'rous, revengeful, cold, and stern,
Each hell-born passion swayed in turn.
And yet though nature had denied
The power to mask the haughty pride
That creeds despised and laws defied;
Though vain the effort made to find
A veil to screen the treacherous mind
To every generous impulse blind;
Tho' every shade his brow o'ercast,
As quick it came and quick it passed,
Betrayed the reckless soul within,
The scorn of virtue, love of sin,
The heart that felt a fiend's delight
In mocking every sacred rite;
Still did he wield a secret power
That never failed in needful hour.
If nature had refused to give
The eye, the brow that could deceive,

She gave him that which made him
still
The fatal instrument of ill—
An earnest manner, flattering tone,
A voice that every listener won,
The thought his aspect could not hide
The fascinating tongue belied,
The look from which all shrunk with fear
Vanished within the charmèd ear.[12]

And who is she, in all the pride
Of youth and beauty, by his side,
So mournful—yet so fair,
Who though no worldly gift denied
Seems still so lonely there?
Not less costly is her garb,
Less fleet or fair her glossy barb,
And when the bugle sounds
With matchless grace her seat she keeps
While bounding on her hunter sweeps,

O'er gates and fences daring leaps
Up with the crying hounds,
'Mid struggling horses keeps ahead,
In crowded field maintains the lead,
Fearing no rival there.
But the glance, careless, heedless mien,
Betray the hopeless void within,
The languor of despair.
The chambers of the sleepless soul—
Those orbs that lustrous shine,
Revealing as they dreamy roll
A beauty there divine—
Once, gems of light, without alloy,
From Nature's faultless mine—
Lit by the rays of tranquil joy
In virtuous eyes that shine;
Now, dimmed by a sorrow unforgot,
Awake—asleep—still there—
And mocked by smiles that linger not,

Extinguished by the mournful thought
And bitter memories there.

"Who is it with such stately pace
I see advancing slow?
Methinks it is a form and face
That I full well should know.
Padilla, use thy falcon sight:
Who is it? Canst thou tell?
If my clear vision sees aright,
Thou too should'st know him well."
"Know him? alas! too well I know
That pale and hateful face,
To whose vile heart for life I owe
My sorrow and disgrace.
And sure am I his presence here
Can bode no good to me;
I feel a dark instinctive fear
Whene'er that face I see.

Ill-omened hath he ever been
To my sad path on earth,
Thro' him what misery have I seen
Since my unhappy birth!
No human eye can penetrate
His dark and scheming brain,
That look betrays no love—or hate—
No sense of joy or pain.
Cold, calculating, ever bent
To gain his own vile ends,
He tramples on the innocent,
The villain he befriends."
"Nay, nay, my dear Padilla, pause,
Have pity on grey hair;
I like him not, but tho' I've cause,
That head I could not spare.
Good service he hath done for me,
His wisdom and his years
Oft aid me in adversity—
For me no toil he spares.

Bear with him for awhile, I pray,
And drive away that fear,
While I to all that he shall say
Attentive must appear."
"Well, Albuquerque, my valued friend,
What brings thee here so soon?
Thou'rt looking grave; doth aught offend,
Or seekest thou some boon?"
"Most gracious Sire, no boon I seek,
'Tis for my country's weal
I venture here, and fain would speak
Her wrongs I deeply feel."
"Speak on, I pray thee, but be quick;
My time, thou know'st, is short;
Of state affairs my heart is sick,
I'm young and love my sport."
"How anxious all Castile hath been
To see her throne secure,
Her King united to a Queen
Of Royal line and pure

Is well known to your Majesty,
And sanctioned by the state.
Your ambassadors did lately, on
The court of Bourbon wait;
How graciously the King of France
Their fair proposals met,
And strove your wishes to advance,
You cannot, Sire, forget.
A daughter of the Royal line
Of Bourbon's ancient race,
Whose form with beauty doth combine
Youth, health, and matchless grace,
Was chosen for our gracious Queen,
And when that Princess heard
What precious gifts—so rarely seen—
God had on you conferred,
Ready her warm consent she gave
To yield her hand and heart;
With blessings from the good and brave
She hastened to depart.

Escorted by a brilliant train,
Warriors in proud array,
She left her native land for Spain,
A long and weary way.
Her safe arrival at your court,
Though late and sadly worn,
I did myself with speed report
Early the following morn.
How much it grieved us all to see
Her look of dark despair,
When learning that your Majesty
To greet her was not there,
I need not say; nor need I tell,
What pains me to disclose,
The words from every lip that fell,
The murmurs that arose,
When waiting all from day to day,
Proud knights and prouder peers
Found nothing but excuse, delay,
And no one from you hears.

The honour of our country, Sire,
The safety of the state,
Your sacred promise—all require
They should no longer wait.
If ever my poor services
Have satisfaction given,
If one who all your wishes
To gratify hath striven,
Hath any longer weight or power
To influence your will,
If deemed worthy in this hour
Humbly to advise you still,
Then earnest I entreat you, Sire,
No longer to postpone
What all your interests require
Should instantly be done."

"Most trusty counsellor and friend,
I weigh well what you say;

Your zeal and goodness I commend,
Your wisdom I obey.
With all due haste I will proceed
To meet my lovely bride,
Too plain I see I have much need
To heal her wounded pride.
Do thou forthwith return to her,
And frame a fair excuse;
Befriend us, faithful minister,
And thou shalt nothing lose."

He paused not to reply, bent low,
And turned with aspect meek to go;
Grave, passionless, and calm his face,
Stately and slow his measured pace.
Pedro, who thoughtful saw him leave,
His own dark scheme began to weave.
With gloomy brow in sullen mood,
And downcast look, he silent stood,

Then turned his steed, and bent his way
To where Montalvan's castle lay.
At length abrupt he silence broke,
To his sad partner thus he spoke:

"Thou'st heard what Albuquerque did say,
This marriage I must not delay;
I will submit with all the grace
I can command, and if the face
Shall traitor prove, and plain reveal
The thoughts that I would fain conceal,
This lip the magic word can say
That drives the phantom doubt away.
List while my purpose I disclose,
No breast save thine my will e'er knows.

"Safe in the walls of yonder tower,
Protected from the hate and power
Of those who scheme my plans to foil—
And well I know how hard they toil—

I thee will place, then hasten on
To Valladolid all alone.
My wily friend will have arrived,
And his deep head will have contrived
To soften down that angry tone
Which these proud knights, it seems, have shown.
For the fair damsel, trust to mè,
A small amount of flattery,
Falsehood in candid accent told,
A manly bearing frank and bold,
A gentle voice, a tone sincere,
Devotion whispered in the ear,
Will calm her fears, her love will gain ;
That done, I need not long remain.
My vow fulfilled, my credit saved,
No longer will I be enslaved,
That hour I shall return to thee,
With thee my joyous soul is free.
Since so decreed it seems to have been,
That this said Blanche must be my Queen,

Contented with the hollow name,
The empty casket she may claim;
She soon will learn it is a toy
That will her queenly fancy cloy,
And when she's tired, I'll find her food
That shall restore her cheerful mood.
They say she's fair; we soon shall see;
But fairness hath no charms for me,
Soft eyes and sighs my soul would tire;
Love would in languor's lap expire.
The golden beauties of our Spain—
Eyes dark and lustrous, that enchain
The fancy, haunt the waking brain—
Alone can win my heart, or light
The flame that shows proud beauty's might;
As veiled in cloud the lightning's ire,
Within this breast throbs living fire,
Where love is nature's fierce desire.
But go I must to meet this thing,
And if I leave a fatal sting

That hope shall blight and grief may bring—
For God's decrees am I to blame?
Do not the high and mighty claim
The right to seek the choicest game?
Is not the proud distinction mine,
Of king 'who rules by right Divine'?
One Ruler reigns supreme in heav'n,
Earth is to earthly rulers giv'n;
Change, fancy, taste, and will, alone,
Govern the monarch on his throne.
Such the wise laws by Heaven kindly made,
By kings and all mankind to be obeyed.
Rest thee safe here, and for awhile
Thy lonely hours with work beguile;
Though lone, thou need'st not feel alarm,
My trusty guards shall screen from harm
Thy precious form—for well I know,
That when from thee I needs must go,
Vile traitors lurk within the land,
Who long to snatch thee from this hand.

But fear thou not, our castle's strong,
The time is brief—for from thee long
I cannot stay—thou hast my heart;
And when compelled from thee to part
I feel I am, in truth, alone;
Could I but dare this bride disown
'Tis thou—yes, thou shouldst share my throne."
Arrived within the castle yard,
He called the Captain of his guard—
Charged him on pain of death to keep
"The place secure; the ramparts steep
To watch and guard against surprise;
To see that no one in disguise
Entered by stealth within the gate—
That no one left the fortress late."
This done, he turned to quit the yard,
Heard the strong gates behind him barred,
Soon gained the road, then o'er the plain
He gave his fiery steed the rein;

And well that steed his rider knew,
Forward with keen delight he flew;
Swift as the arrow from the bow,
Swifter than the storm clouds go
When, sweeping o'er the trackless sky,
Before the Atlantic blast they fly—
Did that dark steed keep on his course.
No need of spur or brutal force—
The costly bridle forward thrown—
The eager voice—the thrilling tone
Told whose strong will thus urged
him on.
Far o'er the plain now lost to view,
On—on with lightning speed he flew.

Alone within Montalvan's tower,
By dark misfortune's fatal power
Broken—and sinking 'neath her fate,
Padilla's mournful daughter sate.[13]

"Thus must it ever be—my life
A scene of bitterness and strife;
A bitterness too keen to last,
A strife that is consuming fast.
I feel the stifled flame within
Its slow but deadly work begin;
'Twill soon be o'er—too plain I see
On earth I am not long to be.
Shall I repine at Heaven's decree?
What have I not been doomed to know,
What am I in this world of woe?
A weed upon the ocean lost,
On every passing billow tost,
From the safe shore that cast away,
O'er the bleak wat'ry waste must stray.
And yet it was not always so;
Till that dark hour when came the blow
That left me desolate on earth,
A helpless orphan to go forth

And find some shelter for my head,
And ask to share another's bread—
I knew not what affliction meant;
E'en when that dreadful hour 'twas sent,
I was too young to feel or see
The load of speechless agony,
The darkness that hung over me.

"I can remember well, though young,
How fondly once a parent clung
Around my neck, and how the tear
Would start when he would call me dear,
And tell me 'I was so like one
Whose spirit pure from earth had flown,
But whom we both should meet above;'
And then, he would express such love
For me, nor e'er refuse a thing
He fancied happiness could bring.
I do remember this, and how
I loved him—God, what am I now?

"Blest parent, couldst thou slumb'ring see
Thy once loved child bend over thee;
Couldst thou know how soon betrayed,
How soon a helpless victim made,
By those who, under friendship's guise,
Her youth *pretended* to advise,
She fell into the fatal snare
That fiends for orphans do prepare,
When left on this wide world alone,
The eyes that watched and saved them gone—
From thy deep sleep thou wouldst awake,
Again thy fallen child wouldst take,
And clasping her in thine embrace,
Kneel with her at the Throne of Grace.

"Ye who, with all this world can give,
Who, bless'd with every blessing, live
In affluence and comfort, free
From want and with'ring poverty

Ye who can take your tranquil rest
In peaceful homes, by fortune bless'd
With pure affection's sacred ties,
Warm loving breasts and sunny eyes;
Ye who, of parents ne'er bereft,
On a cold world have e'er been left,
With none to warn of cunning's guile,
Or screen you from temptation's wile—
Pause ere you judgment pass on those
Whose throbbing heads, denied repose,
To ills exposed you never knew,
Are crushed 'neath woes escaped by you—
Pause ere in haste you brand with shame
The brow as free as yours from blame.

"Where can the desolate e'er find
That heav'n on earth, a tranquil mind!
The hope is vain, where'er I go
The bleak air chills my bosom's glow;

My wakeful eyes cold glances meet,
And icy cold the hands that greet;
No welcome warm, no joyous brow,
Glad faces shun the face of woe.

"He who my sad heart claims, who calls
This hapless form his own, and palls
My bosom with his vows to prove
He loves me, knows not what is love—
That precious gift from realms above,
Where fanned by joy's pure gale it grows;
There the spark immortal glows,
There, love once felt, knows no decay,
Its joys once known, fade not away;
But never in sin's chamber dark
Is seen or felt that heavenly spark;
He feels it not, he never knew
Love's tranquil joy, affection true;
No calm delights, no pleasures pure,
From sin's dark power his soul can lure;

He feels but a consuming flame,
A passion that I dare not name,
From Satan's sulphury vault it came;
From turbid fount no streams pellucid
flow,
From fatal swamp, blasts doubly fatal blow.

"I have besought that he would give
Permission for me but to live
In the calm convent's quiet cell,
Where, summoned by the solemn bell,
I might daily bend in prayer,
For Christ my erring soul prepare.
The wish, the prayer, alike are vain,
That blest retreat I ne'er shall gain;
He mocks me with the hope to-day,
To-morrow takes that hope away;
The victim of his wayward mind,
Peace upon earth shall never find."

And who is she whose hapless fate
Is doomed to know a bridegroom's hate?
Who is she whose heart, deceived,
Hope's flatt'ring vision hath believed;
Whose ear the fairy tale hath heard,
And still believes the promised word?
Who will the Cup enchanting take,
That seems this earth a heav'n to make;
Till startled from her dream she wake?
But wake she will, and frantic see
Her desolating misery.
Lured from her childhood's joyous home,
Into the fatal snare she's come:
The home that welcomed glad her birth,
And gave her all she prized on earth;
Another victim on the scene,
To wish her life had never been;
While one whom she can never know,
Whose name her stricken heart will hate,
Fast sinking 'neath a crushing woe
Mourns over her still darker fate.

CANTO III.

NOT since the day that saw the Moor,
In all the splendour of his sway,
Thro' Belad Walid's[14] portals pour
A tide of pomp and pageantry,
Had that fair city e'er beheld
The scene she witnessed now,
As thro' her streets with thousands filled,
While loud the notes of clarion swelled,
With measured pace and slow,
Advanced a proud and dazzling train,
On Arab steeds with flowing mane,
Rich housings sweeping low.

Again, again, and still the same,
Ringing cheers and loud acclaim,

As on the gorgeous pageant came.
Mounted on a palfrey white,
In trappings green and silver bright,
With sparkling eyes and joyous brow,
Blanche thro' the crowd was riding slow;
The face of beauty, form divine,
The charms which nameless all combine,
In faultless model from the mine,
Proved skill immortal there;
A finished work from His design,
A vision bright and rare,
Type of the seraph forms that shine
In heaven's angelic choir.

In gorgeous robe of gold brocade
Her form enchanting was arrayed,
Spangled with gems, with ermine trimmed,
The work of fairy hands it seemed;
Secured with clasp of gold embossed,
The ample folds were backward tossed;

Her graceful figure given to view
Was deck'd in white, a roseate hue,
The fine spun Mechlin lace shone
through.[15]
'Neath glitt'ring diadem round her head
Ringlets in rich profusion spread;
Costly pendants sparkling bright,
Rarest pearls of silvery white,
Her shell-like ears adorn,
Precious as wondrous gems of light
By Elam's empress worn;[16]
Rich bracelets chased in purest gold,
And wrought in faultless classic mould,
The artist's skill displays;
Arranged in starry groups are seen
Matchless emeralds' brilliant green,
The rubies' crimson blaze,
Glowing 'mid sapphires' azure blue,
And mirrored in the changing hue
Of opals' magic rays.

Proud Trastamara by her side[17]
Her restless palfrey strove to guide;
The mantle rich that o'er him fell
Became his manly figure well;
'Neath heavy folds of velvet green
The leopard's spotted fur was seen;
The collar gemmed, and spurs of gold,
The wearer's knightly order told.
The wond'ring crowd by turns admire
The lovely dame and noble squire,
And whisp'ring to each other say,
"Strange sights are seen this joyous day,
A bridegroom trusts his bitt'rest foe
By his young lovely bride to go;
God grant the omen turn to good,
And spare our country's precious blood."

Silent the crowd now gaze on one
Who 'mid the pageant rides alone,

And some confess'd, with glance aside,
He looked in all save haughty pride
A bridegroom fit for such a bride;
His graceful figure, princely mien,
Bright beauty's favour well might win.
Upon a white and noble barb,
Clad in a flowing purple garb,
Rich velvet silk with ample fold,
Embroidered deep in woof of gold,
And fringed with silver thread;
The regal mantle lined throughout
With ermine from Siberia brought,
A lavish cost displayed.
His gorgeous crown of massive gold,
And rarest diamonds bright,
Huge gems obtained at price untold,
Flashed rays of dazzling light.
But 'neath that right imperial blaze
The stern and haughty brow

Ill brooked the scrutinizing gaze
From searching eyes below;
To mask the smould'ring fire within,
His guilt in darkness hide,
From every eye the thoughts to glean,
His own from every eye to screen,
Each subtle art he tried.
If veiled the fatal scowl of sin,
Might he not hope one glance to win
Of love and secret pride,
Such as by honest worth is given
To him whose soul hath nobly striv'n,
Whose calm clear brow from earth or heav'n
Hath no dark thought to hide,
But is by law of that same heav'n
To sin's pale brow denied?
Vain hope! a task beyond his might
Guilt's wily power defied;

'Neath cloud of treachery, dark as night,
Sparks rapid as electric light
Flashed from his baleful eye,
Such as in path 'cross lonely brake
Dart from the eyes of deadly snake
'Neath Afric's fatal sky.

Surging to and fro the crowd,
Hearty cheers are ringing loud,
Every head is turned to see
Who the rider fair might be;
Bending to the crowd, she's seen,
'Tis Aragon's belovèd Queen;
No glances cold, no silence dread,
Welcomed that illustrious head;
Blameless life and honoured name
Lasting love from all may claim.

'Twas she whose heart with love and pride
Had welcomed warm that fair young bride
When anxious first she came,

'Mid faces strange to all unknown,
To meet a consort, share a throne,
And queenly rank to claim,
And watched her still with all the care
Due to one so young, so fair,
So free from guile or blame.

Upon her pale majestic brow
No sparkling diamonds shone,
On neck and arm the silvery glow
Of purest pearls alone.
The head oppressed with load of care
No load of glitt'ring gems can bear;
A simple wreath of gold,
That lightly bound the raven hair,
Her lofty title told.

That brow with noblest thoughts inspired,
Cast in the mould divine,
Eyes that, by lamp celestial fired,
With holy virtue shine,

Needed no dazzling gems from earth,
No aid from human skill,
To prove the might of living worth,
Or proud descent to tell ;
The mournful shade that dimmed the light
Of that once joyous eye,
Like cloud that oft will meet the sight,
Dark as the gloom of winter's night,
In summer's golden sky,
Told of the hopes that long had flown,
Of tranquil days for ever gone,
Of sorrow unrevealed ;
Of one who, 'mid life's crowd, was lone,
Who had the world's keen anguish known,
But from the world concealed.
Bridesmaids, the fairest of the fair,
Now rapid came in sight,
Bright as the blossoms on their hair,
Fresh gathered in the morn's pure air,
Eyes sparkling with delight.

Their slender forms in costly lace
And glossy satin white,
Choice flowers arranged with charming grace,
And colours exquisite ;
Acacia pink, dark ivy green,
Moss roses white each spray between,
All blending with the silky sheen,
Like tints of rainbow light.

Youths, the noblest in the land,
Heirs to wealth and titles grand,
All clad in rich attire,
To each fair maiden gaily talked,
While by the palfreys' heads they walked,
And strove to curb their fire.

The wily Albuquerque next came,
His cautious pace, his look, the same
As that bright morn in joyous May,
When deep in thought he bent his way

To Sagra's vale, to try to gain
His monarch's ear, nor tried in vain.
But who that scanned the calm pale face
The joy that lurked within could trace?
Who that now watched the cold grey eye
A shade of feeling could descry?
Rich was his dress, but no display
That might his hoarded wealth betray;
Robbers will tremble lest their gold
Tempt stronger robbers to their hold.
Guards and retainers onward came,
A crowd too numerous to name,
All in costly liveries dress'd,
Marshalled in order on they press'd.

And now, two lofty towers between,
All witnessed an enchanting scene:
In the mid air suspended high
Appeared a silken canopy,

A firmament deep, bright, and fair,
With beauteous seraphs dwelling there.
Fine as a veil of gauze 'twas wove,
Blue as the vault of heav'n above,
Spangled with gems of gold around,
Like living stars in depths profound.
Within, arrayed in purest white,
As cherubs in the realms of light,
Children their heavenly voices raise
Chanting ecstatic notes of praise—
Praises of her who rode beneath,
The lovely bride with golden wreath.
That bride she paused and upward gazed,
At the bright vision stood amazed.

Their beauteous forms, the enchanting sound
From voices clear heard floating round,
Awoke within her throbbing breast
Feelings too keen to be suppress'd ;

The earnest look, the moistened eye,
Told all how deep, how fervently
She felt the thrilling tones of love
That came from those sweet lips above;
And as the pageant onward treads
She called down blessings on their heads.

Through the gorgeous windows streaming,
From the glowing orb of day,
Rays of gold and purple gleaming
On the rich mosaic lay.

On dazzling train thro' nave advancing,
On robes of gold and mitred head,
On splendid altar silent glancing,
A blaze of mystic glory spread.

Pale acolytes, 'mid tapers glowing,
Aloft the sacred Cross display,

While strains sublime, now fainter growing,
On organ trembling die away.

Two figures side by side are standing
'Mid silence deep—a voice is heard
In clear and solemn tone demanding
From each the irrevocable word.

One bright as Hope, heav'n's portal facing,
Guileless as the blushing flower,
Bloom—beauty—life—all meekly placing
In the desolator's power.

The other dark—no sign revealing
Of the serpent coiled within—
Every trace of hell concealing
'Neath the dusky veil of sin.

Guilt's restless eye and pale emotion
The tranquil eye of virtue meets,

While brow upraised in mock devotion
His impious lip the vow repeats.

The rite performed, the water holy
Is sprinkled on each diadem'd head,
Silent both are kneeling lowly
To hear the final blessing said.

Again the organ loud is pealing,
From lips gush thrilling notes of praise,
While heads thro' lofty transept filing
With garlands, crowns, and jewels blaze.

The bride and bridegroom now appearing
Beneath the florid Gothic arch,[18]
The joyful crowd are wildly cheering,
As on 'mid floral showers they march.

The stately pageant homeward turning,
Bright silken flags are flutt'ring gay,

Their stalls to gain all eager burning,
The restive palfreys shrilly neigh.

Clash'd the brazen cymbals proudly,
Rung the clarions wild and shrill,
Rolled the drums and tambours loudly,
Pealed the trombones louder still.

Louder, and yet louder swelling,
Rose on high the martial strain ;
Eyes are kindling, bosoms thrilling,
Throbbing pulse in every vein.

On crowded galleries above,
In every window beaming
Fair cheeks are flushed with joy and love,
And sunny eyes are gleaming.

Young girls in garments snowy white,
Their raven tresses flowing,

Fresh garlands green and flowers bright
Around are graceful throwing.

Gay blossoms wet with sparkling dew
Like spangled wings appearing,
Rich scented leaves of every hue
In showers to all are bearing.

The scene is changed—the crowds are gone,
To merry homes departed;
The flowery paths are drear and lone,
By throbbing life deserted.

Again the streets begin to fill,
The crowds are gath'ring fast,
Thousands are gone, and thousands still
Eager are hurrying past;
To the grand Pláza on they go—
Men—women—children, all,
In one continuous stream they flow,
While loud the drivers call.

The square is gain'd, the gall'ries lined,
Throughout the mighty space
The keenest eye can nowhere find
A single vacant place.

Now slow in marching order seen [19]
Gay picadóres rode past
With agile frame and vision keen,
Fleet banderilléros came between,[20]
Strong matadòres the last.

Hushed every tongue—silent stand
The dense and eager crowd,
Impatient for the prompt command
And blast of trumpet loud.

Hark! 'tis the bugle's note that rings,
Wide open flies the door,
Like bolt from cloud the dun brute springs,
Like thunder loud his roar.

From every voice the shout ascends,
The clamour rends the air,
The furious bull bewildered stands,
His eyeballs wildly glare.
On noble steeds with cautious pace
The cavaliers advance,
The gaudy scarves their shoulders grace,
Each grasping firm a lance.

Mark the strong lashing tail—eyes red,
Hoof restless on the ground—
The stifled roar—low drooping head,
And now the frantic bound
With which he rushes on the foe—
The skilful rider wheels,
With lance well poised he strikes the blow,
As on the monster reels.
Bellowing loud and racked with pain,
He checks his wild career—

Wheels—charges on the foe again—
Again receives the spear.

Fast down his flank from throbbing wounds
The crimson torrent pours;
Goaded to madness fierce he bounds,
With agony he roars.
Then, sudden gath'ring all his force,
In full career again
He dashes on—one noble horse
Lies prostrate on the plain;
From his gored side the entrails fall,
In vain he strives to rise;
No more he heeds the rider's call,
Struggling with death he lies.

Another courser ready found,
From 'neath dishevelled mane
Glares wild, and madly paws the ground,
While, grasping tight the rein,

The rider with a hasty bound
Has gained his seat again.
But just in time—roaring load,
To frenzy lashed with pain,
While silent the excited crowd,
The bull comes on again.
Vain all the skill of rider now,
And vain the sharpest steel,
Staggering 'neath the deadly blow,
Both horse and rider reel.
The fiery courser plunges on,
His chest all open torn,
Frantic he rears on high, to shun
The lacerating horn.

Loud snorting, see him writhe his neck,
Expose the ghastly wound,
Champ mad the bit—then reeling back
Fall heavy on the ground.

Breathless the anxious crowd all stand,
Watching the unequal strife;
The rider on the blood-drenched sand,
With failing heart but steady hand
Fights desperate for life.
Wielding the lance with matchless skill
The frantic brute he meets,
The fatal blow escaping, still
Fencing he slow retreats.

The barrier's gained — he grasps the rails—
Cheers—stunning cheers arise;
Too late—his strength is gone—he fails,
Gored on the sand he lies.
Shriek follows shriek—the bugles ring,
The matadóres rush by,
The mantle red, with rapid spring,
O'er the fierce eyes and horns they fling,
The knife is brandish'd high—

Deep in the monster's brawny nape
The deadly weapon flies,
Streams of blood from his jaws escape,
He staggers—sinks—and dies.

The bleeding cavalier they gently raise—
In a deep swoon unconscious still he lay;
The trembling crowd in mournful silence gaze,
Weep—turn—forget—and heedless haste their way.

The sports in which they all delight
At every turn now meet their sight,
Some raise aloft and hurl afar,
With giant strength, the massive bar;[21]
Some strive to roll the pond'rous stone,
By some the whirling quoit is thrown;
Games that their fathers loved of old
That vigour gave to warriors bold.

Others huge piles in haste prepare,
And merry make the bonfires glare ;
The crowded squares are blazing bright,
While close around the shades of night.

Within the palace lights are gleaming,
Soft music floats thro' gilded halls,
In the mazy dance bright eyes are beaming,
The graceful foot now lightly falls.
The beauteous vase with choicest flowers
Each Moresque pillar stands between,
'Neath floral crowns in brilliant mirrors
Life-like flashed the dazzling scene ;
There while loud the music's clashing,
Sylph-like glide the noiseless feet,
And living lips with laughter flashing,
Lips there in mimic laughter meet.

The lovely bride all eyes attracted,
Her gentle mien and winning face,

To all her queenly part she acted
With beauty's captivating grace,
Her guileless bosom all believing
Felt deep the thrill of pleasure glow;
That another was her heart deceiving,
Alas! she knew not—could not know.
As light her foot now trod the measure,
Could she believe a spirit vile
With hate — not joy, had marked the pleasure
That lighted up the sunny smile?
That while her simple mind was fanning
Youth's harmless thoughts and joyous glow,
With wile Satanic one was planning
To turn that joy to lasting woe?
With dance and mirth gay hearts are tiring,
Now, one by one, they drop away,
The glimmering lights are fast expiring,
While eastward glows the living ray.

Whose form is that with rapid step
Through the corridor seen gliding,
Around whose head the folds so deep
All her features close are hiding?
Lo! now before a door she stands,
Pauses as if a voice she hears,—
Now opens it with tremulous hands,
Enters—and sudden disappears.
Was that her form who yesterday
In all the pride of beauty shone,
The gayest 'mid the young and gay,
Why now so changed, and why alone?
Alas! it is indeed the same,
That one short day hath changéd all,
Hath seen her loftiest title claim—
In lowest depths of misery fall.
O'erwhelmed with anguish and despair,
She seeks for sympathy from one
Who all a mother's tender care
And love for her had ever shown.

Within Leonora's chamber now,
List! you may hear her rapid pace,
And sobs she strives to stifle low,
While buried in both hands her face.
Pale and helpless in that hour
Leonora stands in silent grief,
Conscious that no human power
To that brok'n heart can bring relief.

"Shall I my reason still retain,
'Neath this dire blow that crushes all?
Peace gone I never shall regain,
Hopes flown I can no more recall.
Was it for *this* he sought my hand,
Lured me from all I prized to come
To wreck me on a barren strand,
An outcast where I sought a home?

"Leonora, tell me—tell me
What ills impend o'er this doomed head,

But one now seems left to kill me,
One that I must trembling dread.
Oh! let me hear that lip once say
That on *your* love I can depend,
That *you* will ever by me stay,
Will prove to be a constant friend.
Not envy can her dark veil spread,
Or death oblivion throw,
O'er sacred friendship's holiest deed,
Striving to screen misfortune's head
From fate's remorseless blow;
Till this ill-fated life shall close,
Oh! then one faithful promise make,
Be the last friend to soothe my woes,
My friend tho' all the world forsake."

"Oh, calm that frenzy in the brain,
To our great Father kneel with me;
Pray Him your spirit to sustain
'Neath this dire load of misery.

Whate'er the ills by fate decreed
That breast forlorn is doomed to know,
If still that guileless heart must bleed,
That lip drain deep the cup of woe,
One solace will your path attend,
One living breast its truth will prove,
'Mid darkest gloom a steadfast friend
Will love you with undying love,
And cheer you to the bitter end.

"Would to God my efforts ceaseless made for you
Could but have saved you from this deadly blow,
My wakeful nights—the hours I lonely prayed for you,
None but that mighty God will ever know.
Oh tell me how and when this fatal truth you heard,
Whose lip revealed it—tell all that has occurred."

"I'll try, but I no longer know
Clearly what I say or feel,
My senses fleeting come and go,
My brain with frenzy seems to reel.

"In my silent chamber seated,
Thoughts were rushing thro' my brain,
Throbbed every pulse delighted,
Thinking of the joyous scene;
Glowed my bosom—grateful feeling,
For promised love and joy to come,
Visions o'er my senses stealing
Of brighter scenes and sunny home.
Sudden a hurried step I heard
Glide swift along my chamber floor,
A faint and tremulous voice brought word
'That Narbonne waited at the door,
That his excited look and tone
Intense anxiety betrayed,

Entreating I might be alone,
He not a moment be delayed.'
I bid the attendant instant go
'To beg he would no message send,
But haste, and promptly let him know,
I would myself with speed descend.'
With rapid step I hurried down,
Closed quick with trembling hands the door.
O God! how changed from all I had known
The haggard face I stood before.
His eyes with vengeful fury gleamed,
Keen sorrow racked his noble mind,
And long the anxious minute seemed
Ere his fired brain could calmness find.

"With pallid lip he then disclosed
The darkness o'er my young life spread,
The radiant dawn in night had closed,
The light of life for ever fled.

In words that thrilled my soul within,
He told me how deceived—betrayed,
By falsehood base my truth had been,
My path on earth a desert made;
That he who sought and won this heart
Had never given a thought to me,
Came but to act a demon's part,
To wreck my hopes and purity;
That having thus destroy'd my peace,
Gain'd his vile ends by heartless vows,
He scorns my anguish to appease,
Derides my claims, my wrongs, and woes.
'That he was gone—*for ever gone*,
To join the being he preferred;
That I was left—*for ever lone*'—
My ear the words no longer heard,
My heart became like marble cold,
As if life's stream had ceased to flow;
A cloud before my vision rolled,
Dark as the tomb all seemed to grow.

"When I recovered from my swoon,
I heard brave Narbonne fiercely say
'That the base villain he would soon
And bitterly make rue the day;
That he would never sleep until
He had borne the tidings to my home,
And strove my broken heart to heal
By threats of vengeance soon to come.'

"Alas! he knows not woman's heart:
Revenge for injuries dwells not there;
When from that place her hopes depart,
The only inmate is despair.
All—all is past—the dream is o'er,
Vanished to return no more—
In mist behind me fades the land,
The mountains and the golden strand,
With glowing hopes I left;
Impenetrable night before,

How shall I my path explore,
Of all but life bereft?
No voice to cheer, no glimm'ring ray
To guide my solitary way!

"Do not young brides their garbs prepare,
With gems and garlands deck their hair,
To walk in halls of light?
Did I my bridal dress prepare,
My garland and my gems to wear
In the dark vault of night,
To lie in silent slumber 'neath
The pallid marble cold,
My brow still mocked with faded wreath,
And crown of tarnished gold!

"O God! protect me yet awhile,
Thy shelt'ring arm around me throw,
With trust in Thee my thoughts beguile,
Oh! teach me how to bear this blow.

Avert this frenzy from my brain,
The calmness of my mind restore,
Great God! be Thou my friend again,
My trust—my hopes on earth are o'er."

CANTO IV.

SILENCE in Toledo's chambers,
Hushed all lie in slumber deep,[22]
Dozing warders on the turrets
Watch and ward no longer keep.
Silence o'er the city brooding,
On arid mead—scorchèd hill;
Save the roar of rushing waters,
All is silent, all is still.
Fiercely from his proud dominion
The orb of light darts burning rays;
Bright gilded balls and domes and spires,
Seen afar, like fire they blaze.
'Neath cloudless sky glows the ether,
Stifling heat and sultry air;

Birds the shady groves are seeking,
  Blinded with the dazzling glare.
Crowding 'neath the shade of pine tree,
Drowsy cattle listless stand,
Stung by buzzing insects swarming—
  On silent trees—sunburnt land.
O'er landscape spreading far away,
  Valley lone, and hills around,
Faintly seen the haze is trembling—
  Trembling o'er the parchèd ground.

Hark! floating thro' the stilly air,
What echo faint now strikes the ear,
The startled warder heard the sound,
Sprung from his seat, gazed wild around,
Attentive lists—till, heard again,
The thud of hoofs on distant plain,
He looks afar; his anxious eye
'Mid clouds of dust can faint descry

White drooping plumes, and, glancing bright,
Steel helms and lances met his sight.
As slow the dense cloud cleared away,
A troop appeared in proud array.
Their steeds distressed and white with foam,
Towards the peaceful town they come.

Dashing round the barrier steep,
All clad in glitt'ring steel,
The warrior band with rapid sweep
Their gallant chargers wheel.
Before the towers with glances proud
Their panting steeds they rein,
The silver trumpet ringing loud,
Admission free to gain.

The warder to the call attends,
But while his way slow down he wends
Again the trumpet rings;
With rapid step he now descends.

Obedient to the stern command
From haughty lips—with flashing brand
Quivering in his clinchèd hand—
The gate he open flings.
Onward the impatient riders spurr'd,
One head turns anxious round,
As if to list, but nought is heard,
Save the armour's clanking sound.
'Mid silent terror and surprise
The gates are closed and barred ;
Roused by the noise, dark flashing eyes
At the fierce men stared hard.
And soon they see in that strange group
A gentle maiden ride,
While, closing round, the armèd troop
Her figure strove to hide.
The crowd more resolute and dense
Each moment now became,
Their minds no longer brook suspense,
Aloud they ask her name.

The ways are stopped—a voice demands
To know who leads them on,
Who 'tis they guard, by whose commands,
And why she is alone?
The furious chieftain calls aloud
To "Charge and clear the way!"
In vain; with shouts the rushing crowd
Close round in firm array.
With strong hands clinched, arms raised on high,
They dare him to proceed,
Till he shall deign to tell them why
That captive form they lead.
"My noble, kind, and faithful friends,
It is your Queen you see;
These guards do, by the King's commands,
To prison hurry me—
To yon Alcazar's gloomy tower,
Take me by force away;
Oh! save me from their fatal power,
In pity by me stay!

I'm ignorant of your country's laws,
And what offence I've giv'n,
That I've done nought this act to cause,
My witness is in heav'n.
If once behind me I shall hear
Fast closed that prison door,
A something whispers in my ear
I shall come out no more.
Oh, friends! the generous and brave
I see around me stand,
Your Queen, for God's sake, try to save,
Protect me from this band!"
Of aspect calm and lowly mien,
A venerable form was seen;[23]
Through the dense crowd he eager pressed,
And thus the haughty chief addressed;
"Sir Knight, a toiling Pastor meek
Of Him who dwells above,
Ventures to approach and speak
Words but of peace and love.

Ere yet it is too late, oh, pause!
Provoke not hellish strife;
Have mercy, pray—oh! do not cause
The sacrifice of life.
You see the frenzy of the crowd,
And their determined will,
Their vengeful threats grow fierce and loud,
Their numbers swelling still;
One word from you may yet avert
The outburst of their ire;
But say their Queen will not be hurt,
That you'll at once retire.
With speed withdraw these armèd men,
But for awhile retreat,
When all is calm then here again
Your prisoner you shall meet.
Permit her to retire with me
Within the sacred pile,
Where she may find a sanctuary,
And kneel in prayer awhile."

"Most reverend sir, your wish I grant,
But list and mark me well,
No timid priest's advice I want,
To maids your fears go tell.
My prisoner I intrust to thee,
But if within an hour
Thou shalt not prompt return to me,
And place her in my power,
I tell thee, wily prelate, there,
All humble as thou art,
Thy crosier nor thy silver hair
Shall screen thy craven heart.
And hearken! warn this rebel crew,
That if they prize their lives,
They will with speed disperse, and go
Home to their babes and wives;
For I by Holy Gospel swear
That, if they linger still,
And by rude clamour they shall dare
To thwart their Sovereign's will,

I'll bring such vengeance on their heads
That not the powers of hell
Shall save;—ay, fast go tell thy beads,
And ponder on it well!"
From every voice in that dense crowd
The shout triumphant, fierce, and loud,
Rang thro' the echoing street,
When they beheld the vaunting knight
His gauntlet shake with all his might,
Then, swiftly turning to the right,
With sullen brow retreat.
The gallant chargers rapid wheel,
Deep in their flanks the spurs they feel,
Reins loose, heads unconfined,
The clatt'ring hoofs and clanking steel,
With stunning cheers behind,
Echoed like thunder's rattling peal,
As through the streets they wind.

Within the venerable pile,
Where anxious breasts crowd ev'ry aisle,
Pale as death, Blanche, lowly kneeling,
A holy calmness o'er her stealing,
Poured forth her gratitude to God,
And blessed the stone the Virgin trod.[24]
The humble prelate, standing near,
Strove her fainting heart to cheer.
While 'mid the group that thronged behind,
Many a brave and noble mind
Gazed upon the figure kneeling,
Their flashing eyes sparks revealing
Of the fire o'er them stealing,
That kindled in each throbbing breast
Vengeance for innocence oppressed.
Without, the fierce and daring crowd
Breathe forth their imprecations loud;
Some stand in groups, and boldly plan
The flames of civil war to fan.

The horn's shrill blast and bells alarm,
While loud is heard the cry " To arm ! "
Leaders brave followers engage,
War to the bitter end to wage ;
Arm those who toil can best endure,
Weapons of any kind procure.
Here brawny arms with vigour strain
To swing across the heavy chain,
Each end thro' rings and bolts they coil,
The trooper's headlong charge to foil.
There others strive in haste to lay
The pond'rous beam across the way.
Strong breastworks some with skill advance,
To screen them from the fatal lance ;
Nor trust a single thing to chance.
The chiefs in turn encourage all :
" Haste, haste my friends ! " aloud they call.

Around the barrier one is seen
Spurring with utmost speed,

His anxious eye with glances keen
Scanning every point between
The narrow street and open green,
That strong defences need.
Himself the post of danger near,
Ready the cry for help to hear,
A soldier tried and brave,
Who heeds no peril—knows not fear,
If from death or prison drear
His Queen he can but save.

Hark! lŏud the tramp of horse is heard,
Thro' streets deserted hotly spurred;
With sudden rush they come in sight,
Helmets and armour flashing bright
Beneath the noon-day's blazing light;
With steady hand they couch the lance,
As on the crowd they bold advance,
When, drawing rein, they find
Huge beams and chains across the way,

Stern men drawn up in deep array,
With threat'ning looks, behind.

Enraged the chieftain bids them say
"Who dared to thus impede his way?"
Then, fiercely looking round,
He sees brave horsemen—sabres bared,
The crowd all armed and well prepared
To hold each foot of ground.
A leader from the ranks stepp'd forth,
Nought heeding threats or knightly wrath.
Defiance in his eye:

"Sir Knight, your looks and words are vain,
To your safe home begone again,
Your vengeance we defy;
Our Queen so there we shall not yield.
[illegible] person we will shield.
[illegible]

Our purpose stern thou now dost know,
So chafe no more, but thankful go
In safety while you may;
For if thou shalt provoke the strife,
Thou'lt pay the forfeit with thy life,
And rue the bloody day."

With quiv'ring lip and crimson cheek,
The furious chief essayed to speak:
"Dar'st thou to me such language use,
And basely thus with threats refuse
My prisoner to restore?
I tell thee, then, ere yet we part,
Daring, vile rebel that thou art,
This sword shall pierce thy recreant heart,
And bathe in crimson gore!"
Like lightning flashed the blade on high,
But ere the stroke could downward fly,
A horseman dashed before.

"What madness doth possess thy mind?
Thyself and followers all must find
Certain destruction here;
In every street armed comrades stand,
Who wait but for the prompt command
To close upon thy rear.
Despise not warning from a foe,
Back to thy Sovereign instant go,
The unwelcome tidings let him know,
Nought from his ear conceal;
Tell him how all his subjects rise,
That this brave band your power defies,
The cause attempt not to disguise,
The honest truth reveal.
Say that his ancient city, still
Obedient to her Sov'reign's will,
Desires in all things to fulfil
A gracious King's commands;

But that their youthful Queen, afraid
And friendless, hath in terror pray'd
For safety at their hands;
That if he will but grant their prayer,
Cherish their Queen with tender care,
His throne and power let her share,
To their fealty they'll return;
They only ask he will concede
This simple wish; this one good deed
Their lasting love shall earn.
But should he still their prayer deny,
And by base fraud or force shall try
Their Queen again to take,
Then let him know that every arm
Is raised to shelter her from harm,
And battle for her sake;
There's not a man but that loved
Queen,
From hellish tyranny to screen,
His precious life will stake."

The flush of anger fiery red
O'er every feature rapid spread;
Then, turning ghastly pale,
'Neath a calm face he strove to hide
The burning rage, and wounded pride;
But though subdued, in vain he tried
His savage thoughts to veil—
While thus the haughty chief replied:
"This rebel crew and thee I'll spare
For a brief space, while I do bear
These tidings to my Sov'reign's ear;
But short the time will be
Ere thou shalt feel that Sov'reign's hate,
And be made know a rebel's fate,
And rebel's blood shall see."
A furious glance he cast around
While turning to retrace his ground.
Spurring in haste he dashed ahead,
Swift through the gates his squadron led,
The open road to gain;

He then, more calm, restrained the
speed,
To give the rest their chargers need,
And formed in line they slow proceed
Across the sultry plain.
Now loud within Toledo's walls
The herald's warning trumpet calls
The brave to arms to fly;
Archers to man the towers and walls,
Sentries on turrets high,
To watch till shade of darkness falls,
And tell of danger nigh.
The massive gates are closed and barred,
The strong portcullis downward jarred,
All for the coming war prepared,
The despot to defy.
For well they knew all hope was vain
Fair terms or pardon to obtain;
The tyrant never would forget
The outrage that his guards had met.

For safety now their only chance
Lay in strong walls, and sword and lance,
And the good will of Him on high,
Who aids the cause of those who try
The innocent to save;
Who foils the arm of the warrior strong,
Sends shame and defeat on doers of wrong,
And triumph and hope to the brave.
With thund'ring voice and fiery glance
The leader bids his men advance;
The vanguard strong himself he led,
Well pleased to hear the veterans' tread.
The cheering crowd all rushed ahead;
With axe and heavy bar in hand
Follow behind a sturdy band,
A light battalion, young and strong,
With swinging gait all haste along,
Well prepared to guard the rear,
Armed with Toledo blade, and spear.

In phalanx deep on, on they move
To where the Alcazar towers above;
'Tis known brave troops the fortress guard,
For battle ready—portals barred.
The foe who would gain admission to those
halls
Must force the gates or scale the lofty
walls.

With shouts and threats, 'mid frightful din,
The fierce assault they now begin;
With ceaseless blows the axe they ply,
To split the massive gate they try,
The open square to gain;
The timbers strong with bolts on high,
And braced with steel, their blows defy,
Though cleft again—again.
The bar is now with fury driv'n,
And thus a lever power is giv'n
To wrench the hinge away;

With all their might they tug and strain
Hinges and bolts to start—in vain!
The bar itself gives way.
Their bravest men are falling fast.
Pierced by arrows sharp and long
From cross-bow shot by archers strong,
In heaps they bleeding lay.
Baffled, they are driven back at last,
But soon again in line are massed—
Not yet is lost the day.
Where shrill the echoing bugle calls,
They rally swift around the walls,
For the escalade prepare;
Nor long the task, for what avail
Is wall or shaft or coat of mail
'Gainst thousands on by frenzy led,
Ready to fill the moat with dead,
And any deed to dare?
For every man who fights within,
Without the assailants number ten

Then forward! let each throbbing heart
Nobly fulfil a hero's part,
Save their beloved and helpless Queen,
And perish ere the foe shall win.

In separate bands they rapid form,
The walls with force resistless storm,
Heads numberless appear;
The guards with desp'rate valour fight,
But vain their valour and their might;
Well armed and skilful, fast they slay,
Still numbers swarm, and force their way,
Attack both flank and rear;
Outflanked, o'erwhelmed, they are driven back,
But rally—form—again attack;
Their arms, their discipline and skill
Defy the threat'ning numbers still.
The fatal shaft and flashing blade
A ghastly scene of carnage made.
The dying on the dead were laid!

Hark to the piercing frantic cries
From panting lips now heard arise,
"Help—help! let in our friends outside.
Unbar the portal—open wide!"
'Tis done—back the heavy portal swung,
With force against the pillar flung,
Loud the echoing fortress rung.
Like ocean's roar the raging tide
Rushed through the narrow arch,
To where their comrades bleed and die,
There the young impetuous fly,
While veterans steady march.
On ground with bleeding victims strewed
The deadly struggle is renewed;
But, faint and few, the foe's weak band
No longer can the host withstand,
Or brave the conflict dire;
Their duty well and nobly done,
Their honour saved, their bravest gone,

The banner, torn on many a field,
Weapons the brave are proud to wield,
With tearful eyes they silent yield,
And from the scene retire.
Closed for that day the desp'rate war,
Their first fierce battle won,
The ringing cheers are heard afar
Above the dying moan.

Rejoicing loud, their trembling Queen
They gently bear, and place within—
Not in the gloomy, fatal tower,
The victim of a tyrant's power,
Where his dark purpose had designed
All lonely she should be confined,
But through the noble Patio borne,[25]
Where cool and rich arcades adorn
The spacious sides, shafts light as air
Sustaining high the gall'ries fair,

To where the gorgeous staircase springs,
The costly work of Moorish kings,
They hasten on, until they gain
Saloons the pen attempts in vain[26]
To paint—the grace, the symmetry,
The airy lace-like filigree
That 'tween the palm-tree columns spun,[27]
Through long, dim, dreamy vistas run ;
The varied tints of dazzling hue,[28]
The starry vault of azure blue,[29]
Enamelled walls of gold and white,
Where, 'mid the flow'rets glowing bright,
In ornate figures, chaste and clear,
The Koran's sacred lines appear ;
She who now there for safety fled
A holy verse with fervour read—
" With God alone my peace is now,
'Neath His protecting arm I bow."[30]
The dazzling scene she passes by,
Those words alone attract her eye ;

She sees not joyful faces near,
Heeds not the exhilarating cheer,
Her heart's strong pulses rapid beat,
While loud those words her lips repeat;
Man's power she seems no more to fear,
Unseen, a mightier power is near.

Their Queen in that strong fortress placed,
The crowd with speed their steps retraced,
Through every street wild rumours fly,
Horsemen well armed are rushing by;
No certain tidings met the ear,
Confusion all, and doubt and fear.
Some said that distant, hotly spurred,
The tramp of horse distinct was heard;
Some thought afar they could descry
The royal banner floating high,
That helms and lances bright were seen
Glancing the dark green pines between.

Bold leaders now in loud debate
Seek to avert their coming fate;
Vain was the hope their feeble band
Could long the tyrant's power withstand.
With one accord they all decide
To whom they should their cause confide;
To him whose mother loved so well
'Neath that dread tyrant's dagger fell,
Within whose breast undying hate
Burned to revenge that mother's fate.
To Trastamara, good and brave,
They'll trust their Queen and town to save;
Led by his skill, their faithful band
Might long the despot's power withstand.
To the grand master they will send,[31]
Misfortune's ever steadfast friend;
Don Tello, too, will lend his aid;
All of the tyrant's power afraid
Will join their ranks, and hither speed,
For their young Queen will ready bleed.

Pursuivants now are dashing by,
Through the dark portals swift they fly;
Far o'er the wide and dusky plain
On reeking steeds they spur amain,
While anxious eyes still watch their flight,
Fast fading in the glimm'ring light.
Leonora, the untiring friend
Of the forlorn and hapless Queen,
Striving his stubborn will to bend,
Once more was with the tyrant seen.
Prostrate before his gloomy throne,
While her own heart with anguish bleeds,
In all a woman's thrilling tone,
A friendless woman's cause she pleads:

"By the dear memory of one,
To his long rest, alas! now gone,
By your own hopes of peace in heav'n,
Your vows before God's altar giv'n,

By your soul's fear of His dread power
In death's last agonizing hour—
Kneeling, I implore you calm to hear
This my last and earnest prayer!
Oh! yet, before it is too late,
Avert your own, your country's fate.
O'er the doomed land dark clouds arise,
The meanest slave your power defies;
Aloud the vengeful threats are hurled,
Rebellion's standard is unfurled,
E'en Albuquerque, so long your friend,
Has joined the League his aid to lend.
Tello and Fadrique both intend
To act at once—this morn they fled
To join the force by Henrique led.
Dread civil war, with all her train
Of endless woes, is loose again;
The assassin's poniard is bared,
No home is safe, no life is spared;

And all these direful horrors flow,
Spreading around dismay and woe,
Not for an evil light or vain,
A grievance where but few complain,
But for a deed too plainly seen,
Oppression of a helpless Queen.
A Queen whose youth and beauty rare
Demand a husband's tender care;
Whose gentle heart and hand you sought,
And from her home and country brought
To grace your court and share your power;
And never yet hath fairer flower
Adorned a palace, or within
Castilla's ancient halls been seen.
While she who all your thoughts doth claim
Ere long must sink 'neath grief and shame;
In vain she strives to act a part
Nature denies to woman's heart;
She droops beneath the fatal sting
The world's keen shafts at error fling.

'Tis said she longs herself to be
In the calm convent's sanctuary,
Trusting within those walls to gain
That peace she hath sought without in vain.
Then grant, oh! grant her holy prayer,
Deny her not a refuge there—
Her thoughts, her hopes, lie there alone—
Thus for the past will you atone.
And, for the love of God, oh! send
For her whom all the good befriend,
Your blameless Queen, whose broken heart
Fires every breast to take her part;
Restore her rights, but let her live
In peace, her queenly rank receive,
The honour due to merit give;
This one good deed perform, efface
From loved Castile the dire disgrace
Of having ever known or seen
Her monarch crush a helpless Queen!"

"*Never!* Again I will not see,
Or ever let that woman be
The partner of my throne, or share
The power and title that I bear.
So plead no more; and curb your zeal,
Lest you provoke the hate I feel
To do a deed you may deplore;
My love she will not have—nay, more,
Her face again I'll never meet.
Or with vile rebels will I treat;
If mercy they prefer to hate,
They'll sue for pardon ere too late.
My preparations all are made,
The dawn will see my troops arrayed
In yonder camp—a goodly sight
'Twill be, I ween—and ere the night
I'll force their vaunting chief to fight.
His numbers and his plans I know—
Southward in haste he seeks to go,

And hopes 'neath Talavera's tower
To join that rebel Fadrique's power;
But that's no easy task, he'll find;
The Guadarrama range behind [32]
He cannot pass; the melting snows,
And outlaws, fatal bars impose;
I lie before, so fight he must,
And with God's aid that day I trust
Of one vile rebel to be free,
And gain a glorious victory.
Then bitterly my vengeance falls
On all within Toledo's walls;
From this within the seventh day
They shall behold in proud array
My force advance, so let them crave
My pardon, if they hope to save
Their city from the sword and fire,
And calm my soul's vengeful ire.
You have my answer, so begone!
Time presses—I must be alone."

CANTO V.

'TWAS midnight, o'er the starry sky
Light mist was floating rapidly,
'Neath heavy clouds that slowly sailed,
The brighter orb was darkly veiled,
But her deep veil's silvery edge
Illumed the distant mountain ridge,
Glimmered on battlement and bridge.
Save the wild torrent's rushing sound,
Stillness unbroken reigned around,
Within the city sunk to rest,
By watching and by toil oppressed,
The weary lay; the timid near,
In heavy sleep forgot their fear;
The bravest, 'mid arms round him piled,
Lay helpless as the helpless child.

One eye unclosed, one ear alone
Still heard the night breeze fitful moan;
Too conscious of the danger near,
No sound escapes her wakeful ear.
To Blanche there came no tranquil rest,
In vain she strove to calm her breast;
No tidings came that hope could give,
Or her dire mental pangs relieve;
Within the window's deep recess
She sat in utter loneliness.
But why thus sudden does she start;
Why press so hard her throbbing heart?
She hears the torrent far below,
Where darkly deep the rapids flow;
She hears the wind with frequent sigh
Moan through the battlements on high;
But in the interval her ear
A distant tramp distinct can hear.
Breathless she lists; now faint the sound,
Now loud—clatter of hoofs resound.

Far o'er the plain she strains her eye,
No object can she there descry ;
The full moon shone calm, clear, and bright,
The cloud had passed that dimmed her light.
It is—it is a distant lance
'Neath the pale beam is seen to glance ;
Rapid the rider came in view,
With lightning speed his courser flew ;
Eager he rides, as if for life,
All reeking from the recent strife.
But why at such an hour come here,
And all alone thus venture near ?
Untiring still, on—on he spurred ;
Loud from the turret now is heard
The warder's challenge, "Friend or foe ?"
"A friend ; the tidings wouldst thou know,
The portal open with all speed,
Nothing must my course impede.
Haste—haste, and promptly lead me where
The Queen doth take her rest ! I bear

A message from the Count, and must
The import to her ears intrust."

The gate unbarred and oped with speed
Admits the rider and his steed;
But the iron grate with heavy strain,
While creaking loud the massive chain,
Took time to raise, and skill;
Rider and horse now safe within,
Slow down again, with horrid din,
The huge portcullis fell.

In the still night, the rocky hill
Echoed, and faintly echoed still;
Starting, the warrior snatched his blade,
Fiercely the angry bloodhounds bayed,
Throughout the palace terror spreads,
Each breast some coming evil dreads;
Handmaids rush out, and anxious seek
To learn the cause; the pallid cheek

Too plainly told the heart's wild fear—
All ask, yet dread the truth to hear.

To be prepared their Queen to guard,
Brave men are must'ring in the yard;
The stern command, the brief reply,
Give warning of some danger nigh,
Hark! rapid words and voices high
In parley now are heard,
All eager rush and anxious try
The soldier's charger to get nigh
And list to every word.
Some seek to know his rank, his name,
Who sent him there, from whence he came;
His answers, prompt and clear,
To all the happy news conveyed,
News for which every lip had prayed,
And banished doubt and fear.

To their loved Queen they forward send
One she could welcome as a friend,
And bid her lone heart cheer.
For one short hour that trembling voice
Again may venture to rejoice.
"Thank God!" she cried, "oh, let my ear
From his own lips the tidings hear!"

While loud she hears announced his name,
With sunburnt brow and manly frame
Unhelmed a steel-clad warrior came;
The veteran felt his firmness fail,
When gazing on that face so pale,
And form so young and fair;
He marked the tear-dimmed anxious eye,
The effort that she made to try
And mask the trembling fear.
With hasty hand he brushed aside
The blinding drop, then calm he tried
Her heavy heart to cheer.

"Your Majesty will joyful hear
The tidings from the Count I bear.
Soon as he heard the good and brave
Had risen their helpless Queen to save,
Though led by chiefs in war untried,
Had yet the tyrant's guards defied,
His lofty spirit burned to share
The hardships of the desp'rate war;
Joyful he saw the herald come
To call him to the soldier's home.
The camp, the trump, the band's shrill fife,
Proud banners waving high,
The march, the field, the deadly strife,
Clash of arms, and battle-cry,
Are all to him joys greater far
Than earth can bring to one whose star,
Though dimmed by dark misfortune's hour,
Still steadfast points to sov'reign power;
Power that he only cares to wield
The base to crush, the weak to shield;

Power that shall make the tyrant feel
There is a wrong no time can heal,
A wrong that lights within a flame
No despot's frown can quench or tame ;
Revenge alone can slake the fire,
Though sinking in the conflict dire,
Both shall in one red grave expire.

" I said with joy he heard the call
That summoned him from peaceful hall,
With joy he hastened to befriend
His lawful Queen, and succour send,
The brave Toledans' cause to aid.
Promptly his skilful plans were laid ;
Too weak his gallant troops alone
To cope with those the King led on,
By rapid marches day and night
He first determined to unite
His force with that by Fadrique led,

And Tello's young light horse brigade ;
This done, they might with hope make head
Against the tyrant's power, and here
When that proud despot shall appear,
With blazoned banner spread.
His haughty challenge ringing clear,
His power we need not dread ;
But hope that glorious day to see
The flag from o'er his head
Wrenched by the grasp of victory,
Beneath our feet to tread.

"With not a moment to be lost
The Count at once the Douro crossed,
Led his brave squadron boldly on
Till the bleak mountain range he won,
Hot pressed by Pedro's num'rous force ;
Bold Génétaires on fleetest horse [83]
Fiercely repelling each attack,
And driving their pursuers back,

Till the dark tempestuous night
Stopped for awhile the unequal fight;
Then while the blast swept howling by,
His only guide the lights on high,
Glimmering through a stormy sky,
Boldly he took the dreary way
That through the rugged passes lay,
O'er the bleak mountain's pine-clad steep
We struggled on, our only sleep
A solitary hour's repose
'Neath dripping cliff, 'mid melting snows.
But with the dawn appeared a foe
More terrible than wind or snow;
Within a lone and narrow glen [34]
An armèd band of desp'rate men,
Wild outlaws, with their savage train,
Opposed our way. The Count in vain
Pleaded the cause on which he came,
And strove by gentle words to tame

Their fury, while their stunning cries,
With thunder pealing in the skies,
Made such a roar up that wild dell,
As though the fiends had broke from hell,
And hell itself was there;
Then fierce began the mortal strife,
The rush, the shout, the tug for life,
The groans when, stabb'd by secret knife,
The bravest felt despair.
For two long hours they stood their ground,
When, sinking 'neath a fatal wound,
Their leader prostrate lay;
The Count himself had dealt the blow
That laid the boasting ruffian low,
And turned the doubtful day.
Fighting myself close by his side,
I watched the battle's wav'ring tide;
Though thrice driven back the outlaws tried
Our squadron's line to break;

With yells they still rushed on again,
Twice grasped his noble charger's rein,
And strove the Count to take.
'Twas then that, front to front opposed,
The chiefs in single combat closed,
Their followers all fell back.
The outlaw proved no common foe,
Well mounted, his gigantic frame
Towered above all the row.
With arm upraised, for fatal aim
His weapon flashed on high;
To fence or shun the deadly blow,
Ere downward it should fly,
The Count impetuous spurred ahead
While crashing fell the steel;
Plume gone, helm dinted on his head,
Stunned him and made him reel.
So fiercely fell the giant's stroke
Like glass his blade in fragments broke,
But, ere he turned and fled,

As lightning quick came down the stroke
That cleft through helm and head.
Our cheers re-echoed up the dell,
Borne by the tempest far away,
As with a groan their leader fell,
And sudden death-struck quiv'ring lay.

"His comrades round the body closed,
Our march no longer they opposed,
But, broken, bent their way
Towards a chasm yawning near,
Whose gloomy entrance dark and drear
Ne'er felt the sun's warm ray.
Beneath the granite's rugged arch
Slowly they paced their sullen march,
Casting their savage glances back,
Like wolves when on their bloody track
Fiercely they turn to bay.

"Sad was the sight to see around
Our comrades bleeding on the ground;

Ten of our best and bravest fell
Within that dark and fatal dell,
Their last long home is there;
In haste we dug the lonely grave,
Together laid the silent brave,
And paused, while one last look we gave,
To dry the burning tear.

"Onward, though faint, we toiled again;
At noon we reached the distant plain,
Where now our weary troops obtain
The food and rest they need;
The Count impatient bid me find
A courser fleeter than the wind
And fly with utmost speed,
Our lone and anxious Queen to tell
That safe his squadron all went well,
And when the shades of darkness fell
His force he would onward lead.

God willing, with the break of day
His bugles we shall hear,
And see his force in proud array
Marshalled and eager for the fray
Beneath these walls appear.
There the brave men by Fadrique led,
With Tello in his rear,
Will join our camp ; as here I fled
I heard their cheers and heavy tread,
And saw their banners near."

"Thank God! His providence I own,
His gracious hand I see:
His goodness—yes, 'tis God alone
Hath sent this aid to me.
Oh! tell the noble Count your chief,
How grateful I can feel;
While knowing who sends the oppress'd relief,
To Providence I kneel.

But how shall I such deeds repay,
Who own not wealth or power,
Whose all is gone, whose being may
Scarce last another hour!
Yet tell me, soldier, ere you go,
What still I dread to hear,
The King, his movements do you know?
His forces, are they near?"

"May it please your Majesty, I'll say,
And briefly as a soldier may,
What of the enemy I know.
'Tis said that our vindictive foe
Leads on a brave and num'rous force,
Seven thousand men-at-arms, and horse
Well-nigh two thousand more. 'Tis said
That when he heard the Count had fled
And boldly tak'n the trackless way
That through the Guadarrama lay,

With frantic rage his hair he tore,
Hurled bitter threats, and vengeance
swore;
'Gainst his own brave and blameless men
With fury flashed his eyes again,
But urging light-armed squadrons on
He hoped the city might be won
Before the Count could force the pass;
For e'en within these walls, alas!
A faction base has reared its head,
The tyrant's cause to aid; 'tis said
They tremble to provoke his ire,
Lest, vanquished, they should all expire.
Such are the tidings that have flown,
But nothing certain yet is known;
He must be near, though not as yet
Hath any one his squadrons met."

"It is enough! God's will be done!
I'll meekly bear my coming fate.

Brave soldier, I would be alone;
Too long e'en now I've made you wait,
Your weary frame must rest require;
On your strong arm my all depends,
Accept this gift ere you retire,
For what you risk 'tis poor amends."

Morn came; nor since this fair world's birth,
Had lovelier morn e'er dawned on earth;
The clouds that calm like islands lay
In the blue deep above,
The lofty peaks that far away
Seemed towers to guard heav'n's sacred way
To homes of peace and love,
Are kindling with the glorious ray
That gives a world the living day.
O'er grassy knoll and meadow green,
Where fresh the soft wind blew,

Gay flowers ensconsed in leafy screen
Are decked with pearls of dew,
Like fairies seen, on prairie green,
In garb of every hue.
The lark on high from gushing throat
Trills through the air its joyous note,
Doves coo plaintive on the spray,
Lambs round their gentle mothers play.
But who, amid the gloom profound,
That o'er the death-doomed city lay,
Woke conscious of the scene around,
That ushered in that mournful day?
Who marked the deep blue cloudless sky,
The calm ethereal fields on high,
Where sinless spirits rove,
'Mid scenes concealed from mortal eye,
In lasting peace and love?
The prostrate form and feverish head
By slumber's chain still bound,

Is dreaming, mid the dreamless dead,
Of furious war and carnage spread
On crimson fields around.
Some rising with the break of day,
While kneeling to their God to pray,
Were startled by the sound
Of mustering forces, tramp of men,
The horn's shrill blast again, again
Heard echoing around.
Masses now rush the walls to gain,
And eager scan the distant plain,
Where joyful they afar descry
The Count's proud banner waving high;
Helmets and corselets glitt'ring bright,
Flashing rays of dazzling light,
As squadrons urged to utmost speed
Dash swift across the sunny mead.
From wall, and tower, and rampart steep
Rung the wild cheers like thunder deep;

But ere the echo died away,
Far to the north, in bright array,
Banners 'mid spears and helms were seen,
Squadrons of horse with foot between,
Whose filing columns, deep'ning still,
Now sudden halt—then steady wheel
To gain the breezy river's edge,
March rapid o'er Xarama's bridge,
And eager urge their way
Across the broad and fertile plain
Where faintly sighed the ripening grain,
As sinking, ne'er to rise again,
It crushed beneath them lay ;
And as the squadrons nearer drew,
Aloft the blazoned banner flew,
Whose heavy folds exposed to view
Castilla's royal shield.[85]
'Neath a bend dexter gules were seen
Two furious heads of dragons green,

Whose bloodshot eyes, the spears between,
Glared fiercely on the field.

Who, gazing from the lofty tower
Had watched afar that hostile power
In steady line advance?
And when she saw that banner near,
And heard the trumpets' war-note clear,
Had felt her lone heart sink with fear,
And veiled in mist all things appear,
As seen in deathlike trance.

Now loud again and louder far
Is heard the clarion's peal,
While nearer rolls the tide of war,
And flashing sea of steel.

"Oh, haste, brave Henrique, with your band!
Speed—speed to this strong gate,
Charge through yon line with sweeping brand
Ere yet it is too late.

In vain you would cope with yonder force,
Or hope the field to win,
To these strong ramparts urge your horse,
Your safety lies within.
Here, guided by your voice and skill;
We'll brave the tyrant's power,
His slaughtered ranks the moat shall fill,
Beneath the darkling shower.
Our helpless Queen, our children—all
On your firm aid rely,
With your brave men and this strong wall
Yon legions we 'll defy."
And well that chief the danger knew,
Along the line his charger flew,
Then, prompt at the command,
The squadrons halt, their fronts expose,
Then slow deploy, and on their foes
To charge prepared they stand.
The feint succeeds; the foe, deceived,

The Count's resolve to fight believed.
His skill the bravest feared,
But scarce in haste their lines were ranged,
When, lo ! the Count his plans had changed ;
His front rank closed to mask the view,
The ranks behind with speed withdrew,
And sudden disappeared.
The tall dark line, still left in sight,
Now fast retreat till, screened from sight
By shade of pine-grove dark as night,
The ground they held was cleared.
No sound, save tread of hoofs and feet,
Told where they silently retreat
Through lonely pathways swift to meet
The Alcantara bridge.[36]
A long but safe détour they made;
'Neath the strong ramparts' friendly shade,
Halting awhile in ambuscade,
Screened by tall trees and hedge;
From crowded battlements on high

Many a sleepless anxious eye
Silent watched the daring deed,
And saw with joy the scheme succeed.
The bridge is safely gained,
His friends stand ready at the gate,
Well armed the sturdy burghers wait,
Spurred swift 'neath the portcullis grate
The gallant steeds are reined;
But silent still, no shout arose
That might their bright success disclose
To the deluded foe.
The gates are barred, the walls are manned,
Aloft the archers take their stand,
The arrowy storm to throw,
The jaggèd stones are piled on high,
Armed with strong axe and sword stand by
The men-at-arms, proud banners fly,
The brazen trumpets blow.
All stand prepared and view the field,
Mark well the crested helm and shield,

As each knight proudly swept along,
Ranging his men in phalanx strong
Upon the plain below.

In gorgeous mail of gold and steel—
While loud the silver clarions peal—
The dreaded tyrant now is seen
Swift spurring o'er the spacious green,
A brilliant staff behind ;
Black as the raven was his steed,
Save where the white foam clung,—his speed
Swift as a stormy wind.
And as along the lines he flew,
His fiery glance he upward threw,
Each tower in turn marked well.
The lofty bridge, San Martin, gained,
Sudden his noble barb he reined,
When through the air, as lightning fast,
A cloud of arrows whizzing past
On tower and rampart fell.

And when the storm began to fly,
There rose a wild and piercing cry,
With frantic cheers that, pealing high,
Rung through the sultry air,
And told the work of death begun.
All hope of blessed peace was gone,
The piercing shriek, the dying groan,
With savage threats are heard alone
Of fury and despair,
And ere that day be lost or won
Fell havoc must be there.

Yet who that saw the stirring sight,
Heard the loud trumpets' peal,
And marked the waving plumes snow-white
Float o'er the sea of steel,—
Who that stood up in that stern fight,
Conscious he battled for the right,
As 'neath the arrows' darkling flight
He watched the strife begin,

But felt in that exciting hour
The might of glory's kindling power,
The burning thought—the hope his name,
Inscribed on roll of lasting fame,
Might deathless honour win?

Fast flew the shafts, but faster still
Like hail the deadly missiles fell,
Hurled from the whirring sling;
O'er their doomed heads the dark storm came,
And, launched with cool and fatal aim,
Made helm and cuirass ring.

Above the bank where swept the flood
The furious King impatient stood;
With frantic voice again—again
Kept urging on his cheering men;
And as a column topped the ridge,
He spurred, dashed onward, faced the bridge,
And brave the charge he led;

Here, armed with pikes and long quis-
armes,[87]
Stood firm a band of men-at-arms,
While in dark line o'erhead,
Archers with crossbows swarmed the tower,
Prepared their fatal bolts to shower.
Fierce as the savage tiger seen,
Springing to clutch his prey,
With glance of fire and reckless mien
The tyrant strove with weapon keen
Through foes to cleave his way.

But not his own determined will,
Nor daring bands more reckless still,
Who brave rushed on amain,
Tho' fighting 'neath their monarch's eye,
And kindled by the battle-cry,
A single foot could gain.
Repulsed, his force compelled to yield,
Backward the shattered column reeled,

And bleeding scattered o'er the field,
Their strength and courage vain.

Like the wild wave that 'gainst a firm-based rock,
With white crest tossing, proudly surges on,
Broken and reeling 'neath the thund'ring shock
Sweeps the tamed water back, its fury gone.
Baffled, defeated, and enraged,
Still fiercer now the war he waged,
Advice and danger spurned,
The more untoward seemed his fate,
The more intense the fire of hate
Within his bosom burned.

Furious as the torrent wild
From lofty mountain rushing down,
Finding by rocks in channel piled
Its fierce career is backward thrown,
The broken waters, gathering there,
With sudden and tremendous force

Dash along the tide to clear,
Driving the boulders from the course,—
Thus the haughty King, defeated,
Suppressed the fire within that raged,
Till, his skilful plans completed,
The foe o'er dead and dying engaged,
His forces massed and brought to bear,
Their whole united strength could throw,
Storm every rampart unaware,
And crush with numbers every foe.
A chosen band with care arrayed,
From his own guards, a strong brigade,
Bold archers forward thrown,
Stout billmen for the palisade,
And daring youths for escalade,
Again he now led on.

Hark! to that shrill and startling sound,
Through tower and bastion echoing round!
'Tis the loud clarion blown,

Horses riderless madly tore,
While clear above the battle's roar
Rings the stirring cry, "Charge once more
For Castile's King and throne!"
Forward, though ankle-deep in gore,
Against the strong bridge thrown,
Two thousand men-at-arms again
Are struggling o'er the quiet slain—
To them war's trumpet calls in vain—
Their spirits soar that field to gain
Where peace wins glory's crown.

Again the carnage now began,
Afresh the crimson torrents ran,
The battle's thund'ring cry
Rung fierce and loud from either host,
As on the bridge now won, now lost,
Banners proud are wildly tost,
While forward, borne on high,

One wavers, rocking to and fro,
Mid struggling foes—now sinking slow,
While 'neath the flashing sabre's blow
The brave defender falls.
The Knight himself is in the van,
Where, fired by vengeance, every man
The desperate war still fiercely waged
And while around the tumult raged,
The pealing trumpet calls.
Once more a charge they furious made,
Their frantic chief, o'erwhelmed, to aid;
His flag now striving to regain,
Is seen, with flashing eye,
On shields and helms again—again
His battle-axe to ply.
Like light'ning blades aloft are flashing,
Spears 'gainst spears and armour clashing—
With the battle's roar increasing,
Like thunder pealing nigh,

With the clang of blows unceasing,
"Don Henrique!" is the cry.
Where'er his comrades waver, there
The thrilling voice is ringing clear,
His dauntless spirit firing all,
While fast the brave around him fall,
Content to win or die.

Hark to the frantic stirring cheers,
Like stunning thunder's roar,
As proud the rescued flag appears,
Waving on high once more.
Once more that band amid their foes
Did now a gallant front oppose;
Though ranks on ranks upon them close,
Their numbers they defy;
That day had seen their warfare o'er
The tyrant crushed to rise no more,
That field had been—now drenched with gore--
Their field of victory,

Had all within those walls been true,
Faithful and daring as the few
Who—freedom's banner overhead—
On comrades' graves could proudly tread,
And battling bravely side by side,
In freedom's cause had nobly died.

The ballestéros, helmed in steel,
Seen rapid through the camp to wheel,
Now to the van are brought;
Round the doomed tower fast they throng,
Whence sheltered by pavisors strong [88]
Their fatal bolts they shot.
Shafts strong, points sharp of tempered steel,
With force terrific flew,
Shields hard, and links in coat of mail,
And vizors all pierced through.
In vain the brave who manned that tower
Undaunted faced the ceaseless shower,

The bravest in that dreadful hour
'Neath the dark tempest fell;
No wall or friendly screen had they,
The parapets were swept away,[39]
No means are left by which they may
The fierce assault repel;
The brave defenders hotly pressed,
Outnumbered ten to one,
With fatal wounds and thirst distressed,
Scorched 'neath a blazing sun.

His costly mail no longer bright,
No longer flashing rays of light,
The silvery lustre gone,
Battered and dimmed, and stained with blood,
'Mid the faint band still Henrique stood,
His fiery spirit unsubdued,
And bravely cheered them on.
Pale was the cheek, yet flashed his eye

With wild and quenchless energy,—
Not yet all hope was gone;
A shaft well aimed might pierce the head
Of him whom all the living dread,
And lay beside the noble dead,
Their precious blood still warm,
To welter in the gory bed,
His execrated form.

But faction, with her hell-born train
Of envy, malice, lust of gain,
And guilt of truth afraid,
Had reared her head, nor slow to prove
Her forward zeal, now basely strove
The dastard foe to aid:
While leaders brave were all engaged,
And loud the furious conflict raged,
From the high walls unheard, unseen,
Miscreants hurled cord the banks between,
Where deep the torrent ran.

Now from huge beams, laid firm along,
Fast they secured the cordage strong,
Till strained aloft a rope bridge hung,
The roaring tide to span ;
While echoing loud the walls within
Is heard the battle's ceaseless din,
And rings afar the trumpet's peal,
Numbers across in silence steal,
Till safe they gain the bank,
Where, through the rampart, by the aid
Of traitors' hands, a breach is made.
The hostile forces rushing through
The fatal opening, eager flew
To where the brave, now faint and few,
Still fought in serried rank ;
Unheard amid the clash of steel,
Unseen their silent march they steal,
Till close upon their rear
They pause to form, then rapid wheel,
And charge with stunning cheer.

In vain that gallant band still fought,
Their fiery courage 'vailed them nought,
Hemm'd in at bay they stood,
Fiercely they waged the desp'rate strife,
O'erwhelmed, not vanquished, each his life
Sold dearly as he could.

Small triumph could the victors claim,
Few there will live to boast of fame;
Pierced by the victims' vengeful steel,
And faint from loss of blood,
Their ears heed not the trumpets' peal,
Their breasts no pride of vict'ry feel,
Visions of life's vain glory fled,
Their heads with torture bowed,
Like mourning statues o'er the dead,
As marble pale they stood.

Unharmed, and rescued from the strife
By those who gave both limb and life
His worthless life to save,

The haughty monarch breathless paused
'Mid the dire wreck himself had caused;
And did it change his savage mood
To gaze upon that field of blood,
The dead and dying brave?
While broke upon his sullen ear,
The victim's shriek, the victor's cheer,
The feeble cry from lips that near
One drop of water crave;
As 'neath him swept the turbid flood,
Whose waves on waves roll'd tinged with blood,
In mournful murmurs by,
And 'mid the eddies dark and deep,
From struggling forms not yet asleep,
Came up the gurgling cry—
Did no still voice in that dark hour,
Mightier than the despot's power,
Its solemn warning give?
Nohand point silent to the day,

When e'en the proudest face of clay
Must the dread summons quick obey
And final doom receive?
When, pealing o'er a startled world,
A louder trump shall ring,
A mightier banner wide unfurled,
'Mid tempest-clouds as black as night,
In waves majestic, snowy white,
Its folds afar shall fling;
The flag that, with no spot to dim,
O'er blessed saints shall wave,
Emblem of peace, of love, of Him
Who died a world to save.
'Mid that bright band who then shall stand?
He who hath contrite wept,
Or he whose brand in bloodstained hand
With savage joy to life's last end
O'er peaceful hearths hath swept?

Still the fierce battle fiercer grew,
Ranks fresh the bitter strife renew,
When sudden 'mid the fight,
From the dense columns of their foes
The startling shout of victory rose;
While close beneath the massive gate,
Where raged the conflict desperate,
There flashed a vivid light,
And now a desolating cry
Burst from within the walls on high,
As, panic-stricken, they behold
Black smoke in volumes upward rolled,
And blazing clear and bright
The spiral flames now swift ascend,
Now o'er the sable turrets bend,
And now in one tall column send
Its ruddy glare afar.
With fire and smoke all charred and black,
Aloud the burning timbers crack,
Ceased for awhile the war.

The savage victor with delight
Paused to view the hellish sight
That snared his destined prey,
But waiting till the blazing fire,
Its task accomplished, should expire,
And leave the open way.

The fight's renewed; no more the shroud
Wreathed by the dense and murky cloud
Obscured the view; the flames sink low,
Faintly the dying embers glow.
The gate, hard oak, as iron strong,
That stood the brunt of war so long,
And bolt and battle-axe defied,
Now black, huge chinks were yawning wide;
Where to the hinge the beams still clung,
The calcined timbers loosely swung,
Now crackling loud, now giving way,
In smould'ring heaps the cinders lay.

Billmen their blows now rapid ply,
No longer bolts their blows defy,
'Neath the sharp axe, fast crumbling all,
Hinge, beams, and bars in ruins fall.
To gain the portal's blackened arch
The cheering columns eager march,
Ranks hurled on ranks still onward pour,
While 'mid the battle's dreadful roar,
The tyrant now is seen,
His battle-axe with slaughter red,
Spurring his dark and foaming steed
The open arch to gain.

Piled within the narrow way,
Thick the frightful carnage lay;
The noble brute had swerved aside
To shun the curdling crimson tide,
And suff'ring, not yet o'er;
His gentle nature pain could feel,

Felt never by the heart of steel
In him whose frame he bore;
But in his flank the sharp spur dashed,
Like fire his glaring eyeballs flashed,
And plunging hard, dark blood was splashed
On the white faces round,
Then snorting loud, with restless head
Low drooping to the ground,
Gently he touched the quiet dead,
And forward with a bound.

To quit the gate, to mount his steed
That ready stood, and onward lead
The few who from his bleeding band
Had strength still left to wield the brand,
And rushing headlong on the foe,
Fell the fierce despot with a blow;
Ere in full force he gained the street,
Assail both flanks, and thus defeat

The wav'ring column's broken link,
Dismayed at seeing their monarch sink,
While pent within the narrow way
Is tumult all and disarray—
Such were the thoughts that rushing fast
Through Henrique's mind, like lightning,
pass'd;
His brain o'erwrought, bewildered, strays,
Madness alone such thoughts could raise;
Not yet the destined hour is come
Fated to seal that tyrant's doom;
Alas! still distant is the day—
But God decrees—His will obey—
That day will come! but deeper still
His guilty soul must sink in ill.
As yet but half his glass is run,
But half his deeds of darkness done;
The demon, certain of his prey,
Grants him a transitory day,
And mocks him with a brief delay.

On—on the hostile masses pour,
The feeble cry is heard no more,
Unheard the dying moan;
Within the walls the battle's roar
And thund'ring cheers alone,
From living voices upward soar,
While mad with fury troops rush in.
Oh, God! the shrieks, the groans, the din,
Clatter of hoofs and armour's clang
That through the affrighted city rang;
A moment more and nought can save
The bravest from a blood-drenched grave.
"Oh! linger not, no more delay,
Your life yet save—away, away!
Ruin and death must come on all,
Hopeless our cause if once you fall,
Our fate depends on you alone,
You killed or captured, all is gone;
Oh, fly! it is not yet too late,
Collect your band, with speed retreat,

The nights are dark, your steeds are fleet."
Such the shrill sounds amid the wail
That now the chieftain's ears assail;
Distracted, wounded, stunned with blows,
How to decide he hardly knows.
No time is left, the foe is near,
And pressing on with deaf'ning cheer;
To fate he yields, with rein in hand
Hoarsely he gives his last command,
But those who heard the mournful tone
Felt in their hearts all hope was gone.
" Lose not a second, mount and fly
To where the Alcazar towers on high;
Tell the brave men I still am nigh,
Bid them to stand, and nobly true
To their loved Queen, their duty do;
And tell our Queen'tis not the foe,
But traitors vile that make me go—
Traitors to her and these brave men.
Tell her that soon we'll come again,

When both the tyrant and his crew
Their ill-got victory shall rue.
Bid her to cheer, though lost the day,
Dearly we've made the victor pay;
Half of his bravest men are down,
His ablest captains all are gone.
The Alcazar towers are strong, and mann'd
With faithful followers, long may stand;
I go, but not for many days,
Another dauntless band to raise."
He turned to friends who mournful gazed,
Silent he waved the hand upraised,
Then stroked Uraca[40] fleet and strong:
"Bear me, good steed, but safe this night,
Your name shall live in story long,
And glory share in many a fight."
"Now, comrades, fly, since fly we must,
To our brave steeds and night we'll trust."
Loose from his hand the rein he flung,
Forward the fiery charger sprung,

And much that fatal night he'll need
That noble Arab's utmost speed.
With spirit brave and muscle strong,
Warriors and war-steeds rushed along,
Soon gained the wild rocks' rugged edge,
Where springs the Alcantara bridge.[41]
Swift o'er "Bridge of the bridge" they
fled,
Each lofty arch's trembling head
Echoing loud the thund'ring tread.
But dashing on, the fading light
Concealed their squadron's headlong flight.
'Cross field and moor they spurred amain,
The distant pine-clad hills to gain,
While the dark sky and trackless way
Grew darker with the closing day.
"What sound was that heard far behind?
Was it the gusty cold night wind
Across the dreary plain;
Or distant river's roaring tide?"

With voice electric Henrique cried,
As sudden he drew rein ;
"The rush of steeds I seem to hear
With rapid strides towards our rear
Approaching——list again!"

Like untamed horse that in the wild,
Startled by sudden growl,
'Mid cairns o'er sleeping warriors piled,
Where wolves when famished prowl,
With head upraised, attentive ear,
He lists till he distinct can hear
The savage howl again,
And sees afar 'neath gloomy sky
The dark ferocious train,
With rapid gallop stealing nigh
Across the dusky plain,
Then snorting loud, with frantic bound
He springs away—away,

Impetuous as from Alpine hound
Rushes the helpless prey,
O'er trackless waste, impelled by fear,
Foaming pursues his mad career
Still on, away! away!
Till in lone gorge 'mid mountains drear,
While fading fast the light—
The baffled troop no longer near,
He checks his headlong flight.

Thus the brave Count, now crushed by fate,
Distracted and forlorn,
The few who nobly shared that fate,
Outnumbered, faint, and worn,
Through trackless paths, their steeds distressed,
By foes relentless hotly pressed,
Still strive and hope to gain
Some refuge safe, some lone retreat,

Where friends and shelter they may meet—
Alas! the hope seems vain!
The hoofs' loud tread the rising wind
Warns them, the vengeful foe behind
Must soon o'ertake their train.

Through ways obscure 'neath starlight sky
Again with utmost speed they fly;
With panting chests but noiseless tread,
On turf untrod and arid grass
The noble steeds all spring ahead,
To gain the distant mountain pass.

'Cross moorland dark as swift they fly,
Like bolts by night 'cross lurid sky,
Gleamed the bright helms of steel,
While faint afar, on trembling ground,
The foe's strong chargers' hoofs resound,
Like echoing thunder peal.

Hark! louder still, approaching near,
Clattering steel and shouts they hear;
On—on they come, still gaining ground,
That band forlorn they now surround.
'Mid the wild tumult that arose,
The clash of blades and clang of blows,
A frantic voice met Henrique's ear,
That told his mortal foe was near.
Oh for one moment's blessèd light
To guide his vengeful falchion right!
In vain the wish, not keenest glance
Can now discern that countenance;
But in the dark he sees a crest
That proudly floats above the rest;
He raised his blade; the hope, the wish
With vigour nerved his arm afresh,
With fatal aim descends the blow—
A cry of agony, the foe
Falls lifeless back, cheers ring around,
While rings the armour on the ground.

Is it the King his hand has slain?
He knows not, but he knows 'tis vain
To hope to save a single life,
If he prolongs that savage strife;
His band is formed, the word is giv'n,
Through circling hosts their steeds are driv'n;
Each knight and follower seemed to feel
All hung upon his single steel,
And each performed his task so well,
All arms resisting lifeless fell.
That desp'rate charge has cleared the way,
And closed the short but deadly fray;
Vain now all effort to pursue,
Foeman his foe no longer knew.

The chill night breeze that faint had blown,
Had now a howling tempest grown;
Clouds dark fast gath'ring in the sky
Obscured the last pale beam on high.

Alas! for suffering Castile,
Destined to bleed and suffer still!
Alas! for her ill-fated Queen,
Doomed still to suffer sorrows keen.
Among the number of the slain
Whose blood now drench'd that darken'd plain,
No execrated tyrant fell
'Neath the sharp falchion aimed so well;
Asleep, beyond the reach of care,
The brave, the innocent lay there,
The simple whom the vile ensnare.
The vile one, still alive and well,
Brooded o'er darker schemes of hell.
Frantic to find pursuit was vain,
His hateful voice is heard again,
At blameless valour mad he raves,
Heaps vile abuse on willing slaves;
Revenge and fury sway by turn,
Unslaked the fires within him burn.

Swift to the city doomed he turned,
All thoughts of peace and pity spurned.
Vainly the pen essays to write
The horrors of that mournful night;
Glad would we leave the sick'ning scene,
And from the light those horrors screen,
But stains so dark no time can fade,
The truth forbids to mask or shade.

'Shall he whose vengeance never sleeps,
Who victim pale on victim heaps,
Who never sheathes the reeking blade,
E'en here his punishment evade?
Shall not his name to endless time
Be lisped by sons of ev'ry clime,
Branded on earth with lasting shame,
With fiends enrolled his lasting fame?
Shall we the faults of others mourn,
Severely judge the lowlier born,
Yet he escape because a thing

Whom accident has made a king ?
Hold up to scorn the sins of one,
Excuse the sinner on his throne ?

The Roman's pen records a tale[42]
At which e'en now the world grows pale ;
The struggle, and the carnage dire,
The scene of rapine, blood, and fire
That raged within Saguntum, when
The mighty Carthaginian[43]
Stormed the fated, famished city
That scorned to ask the victor's pity,
And the still darker shades of hell
Heav'n witnessed when Numantia fell.

Where victor stern no victim spared,
No pity felt for pain ;
For laws divine nor human cared,
If but his end could gain ;

Saw babes with mothers in the fire
In burning husbands' arms expire,
Their children pale around the pyre
Heard shriek and sob in vain.

E'en to this day the execrated name[44]
Of him who wrought that deed of lasting shame
Is handed down from mournful sire to son,
The crime, the fiend, blood-stained, forgot by none.
Yet foemen there 'gainst foemen stood,
Aliens in country and in blood;
If on their Maker's laws they trod,
Untaught, they knew no laws, no God,
While he who wreaks his vengeance now
On helpless victims fallen low,
Who slaughters brave and noble men,
Too faint to raise their arms again;
Who stabs with his remorseless blade
The pallid youth[45] and tender maid,

And sees in agony expire
The victims of his ruthless ire,
Claims the same country, tongue, and creed,
And knows that he must one day plead
For mercy at the selfsame throne
With them to whom he now grants none.

When this earth, doomed, from worlds of light
shall fall,
And starless darkness spreads her mournful pall
O'er living masses—silent dead and all—
Spectres will be seen in the sepulchral gloom,
Haunting the dreary precincts of a tomb—
Shrieking as they shrieked that dreadful hour
When, mute, and trembling in a demon's power,
They saw the smoke, and heard the hissing fire
For them prepared in torments to expire;
Flitting and shrieking round his silent bed—
Shrieks that shall pierce the marble and the lead,
E'en penetrate the chamber of the dead.

His spirit, sleepless, on the lake of fire,
Praying to Heaven to be let expire,
Hears the fierce murmurs of their vengeful ire.
In vain he prays for one calm hour's repose,
From direst pangs his soul no respite knows;
From the drear margin of the seething deep,
Where gleam the eyes, that, frenzied, never sleep,
From barren strand, dark glens, and gloomy caves
Lit by the fiery crests on raging waves,
Terrific screams reverberate around.
Like maniacs in crushing folds of Hydra bound,
Raving, and shrieking with the agonizing wound.
Trembling with guilty memories and fears,
The frantic wail of voices known he hears.
Lo! all silent now, the spectral group appears,—
Shades of the guiltless, he had seen expire,
Himself exulting o'er the mournful pyre;
Faces of the helpless, racked in lonely cell;
Features of the murdered, writhed as when they
fell,

In their frenzied glances seen the horrors they could tell;
Forms that once, agonized, had for pity sued,
By withering scorn and gloomy vault subdued;
Pale innocents, whose eyes, fixed with terror, gleam,
Their lips still quivering with the stifled scream,
Still bleeding, struggling 'neath the blade they seem.
Shuddering, he turns from the appalling sight,
Praying for darkness, and eternal night;
Swept o'er the blazing flood on racing waves,
'Neath flashing cliffs, the flaming ocean laves;
By rocks uncalcined with the fiery spray,
He seeks by rapid flight—far, far away—
For some lone creek, or solitary bay,
Where no shrieks heard,—the heat less scalding there—
Its frightful doom his soul might hope to bear.

Vain thought—vain hope—no haven can he find,
No shelter from the blasts of scorching wind!
Waves still of fire—illimitable sea—
Cliffs looming still that must interminable be.
Satanic power had a mighty rampart made,
Lest one Power mightier should the realm invade—
A Power that instant could, when such His will,
Hell's raging fires and shrieks of anguish still.

Piled there, stupendous rocks, in sulphury mantle veiled,
Round whose drear heights no wing had ever sailed;
No glittering pinions ever there had clung,
No warbler there her mournful requiem sung;
On the hot plain, that crowned the vast sea wall,
Unheard the sea-gull's wail, or plover's call;

Where fragrant heath once bloomed, where verdant woods had been
With beauties nameless spread o'er nature's fairest scene,
All perished the same hour they were by Satan seen.
Trees blasted by the fire, now leafless, silent, stand,
Like fiends in dark battalions, ranged across the land,
To guard the "Realm of Fire's" immeasurable strand.
O'er sunless wilds afar bleak desolation spread
Twilight dim around; sky starless overhead;
In fathomless ravines, everlasting night,
Volcanic range above, in smoke half veiled from sight;
Now flashing lurid beams, now flames of dazzling light;

There white electric bolts the towering peaks assailed,
While floods of lava fierce, by fiercer lightning paled,
Rushed through gorges wild, in blinding streams to pour
On frantic breakers, ever thund'ring on the shore.
In caverns' gloomy depths the billows moaning sound,
Fiery breakers lash dark iron reefs around ;
O'er Hell's dominion raging, the elemental war,
Bolts of fire pierced hotter fire—thunder crashed afar.
Gigantic limbs from blasted trees, by the tempest riven,
O'er the rampart swept afar—into Hell's furnace driven ;
Sparkling rocks from fire-lashed reefs, by breakers wrenched away,
Hurled 'gainst the frowning barrier, in flashing molten spray.

The surges vast repelled, from the shock enraged rebounding—
The tumult loud in peaks and craters deep resounding
With the echo ceaseless rattling, 'mid stunning thunder's roar,
Like fragments from a lost world, heard crashing on Hell's shore;
While Heaven's last Trump is pealing o'er a world that's seen no more.

Still the whirling cyclone the lake is fiercely lashing,
And solar light from fiery crests o'er the scene is flashing,
Surging up the fire-proof wall, higher and still higher,
Raging billows o'er the barrier hurl the molten fire.
Again the lava fierce illumes the dusky plain,
The desert wild is drenched with lava streams again,

A transient brightness spreading o'er the dismal scene,
Lurid gleams on blackened trees, and on sombre
glades between.
In the weird gloom ever, a Phantom lone appears,
Pointing to the shore, drenched with unavailing tears,
And to the flames eternal, roaring on the lake—
Where faintly lips are calling to God their thirst
to slake.
And where 'mid blinding spray, in ever-scorching
flame,
A supplicating prayer from parchèd lips there came,
"*That Christ one angel from the realms of bliss*
would spare,
To tell the loved on Earth, what the lost in Hell
must bear."

From the lifeless forest winding, a pathway drear
and steep,
Led through the mighty rampart, down to the
flaming deep;

There by the adamantine gate alone, the lake
was gained—
Stupendous towers of adamant the portals'
weight sustained.
On dizzy peaks far above gigantic figures stood,
Sentinels to watch afar, and guard the crowded flood.
In the fire's dazzling glare, the sable warriors loom,
Like a spectral fire brigade in Ætna's flaming womb.

Where'er the tortured soul's anxious glances roam,
Naught can it see but fiery flakes of foam;
Now upward on vast heaving billows tost,
Plunged downward now, in seething masses lost;
Drowned in quenchless fire, unheard the piercing cry,
The shriek of unutterable agony.

Upheaved, and awakened, he glides swift away,
Far—far o'er the ocean in fire-flashing spray;
The horrors he flies from pursue him again—
In the roaring tornado they sweep o'er the main.

'Mid dense vapours rolling in sulphurous air,
Clouds wreathed with black smoke, and the fire's crimson glare,
A rush and the hiss like fierce serpents he hears:
In the whirlwind's hot blast every spectre appears,
To Furies now changed—eyeballs darting bright flame—
Like demons loud yelling, all hissing his name,
In voices of thunder, they frantic exclaim:
"Eternity will hear these fiery billows roar,
Lashing eternally this desolated shore!
Our souls with Him who gave them now take their tranquil rest,
Repaid for all they suffered, with Heaven's pure joys are blest.
Denied one glimpse of Heaven—*thy soul for ever lost*—
For ever on this flaming sea writhing shall be tost.

Amid the scene appalling—*the lost on crests of fire,*
Crying to the Saviour to stay His Father's ire.
Above the roar of breakers, and the agonizing wail,
Our frenzy growing fiercer, shall o'er Hell's powers prevail.
Where the fire is hottest, in the flames' terrific glare
Our shadows will be flitting, our shrieks heard louder there.
The Redeemer, when on earth, the guilty ceaseless warned:
His mercy, and God's vengeance, you there defied and scorned;
Doomed now to endless torture—*no mercy granted here*—
By God and Christ forsaken, Hell's torments you must bear.
Thy victims countless murdered, their mortal pangs all o'er,
Their ghastly phantoms bleeding, and shrieking ever more—
Will grant thy soul in agony, repose no more—no more!"

CANTO VI.

TO one the power divine was giv'n
To hymn on earth the scenes of heav'n;
Aloft on fancy's wings to soar,
Till seen unveiled the promised shore.
To penetrate those realms of light
His spirit risked the daring flight,
Saw depths no other eye could see,
Gazed unawed into the sanctuary.
And thus his glowing vision fired,
The mighty minstrel* felt inspired;
With thrilling hands the chords he strung,
Enraptured o'er his lyre he hung,
In strains sublime his theme he sung.

* Milton.

And vainly feebler bards essay
To rival his immortal lay.

The art to paint with matchless grace
The lineaments of beauty's face
Is giv'n to others; so well and true
They fix the expression's faithful hue,
The lofty thought, the temper meek,
The glowing canvas seems to speak.
View Carlo Dolci's pencil trace
The features of a Saviour's face,[46]
Stamp on the brow the look divine,
Eyes that with holy lustre shine,
The soul's deep calm, the God-like air,
The lips that all but breathe in prayer.
In Raphael's wondrous painting see
Mind from sin and passion free,
The infantine simplicity;
Celestial forms, whose looks benign upraise
Our thoughts from earth, and bid us give the praise

To Him who such immortal genius gave,
The star that fades not o'er a world's dark grave.

But how shall my weak pen essay
The faintest picture to convey?
Where shall a feeble sterile mind
The magic power of language find
To paint the scene—the wild despair,
The piercing cries that rent the air,
When in the palace it was known
The town was stormed, the Count had flown?
Or how depict, in words that glow,
The deep, the agonizing woe
That overwhelmed that hapless Queen,
To whom all hope seemed ever vain?

All consciousness her brain forsook,
Her frame an icy tremor shook,
Senseless she sank upon the floor,
Her earthly sufferings seemed o'er.

So pale her look, so still she lay,
Hands clasped together cold as clay,
Silent she seemed in death to pray.
Her fond attendants round her crowd
With streaming eyes, some sobbing loud.
To the soft couch with tender care
Her lifeless form they gently bear,
Bathe her pale brow, then anxious bend
O'er the still frame, and fond attend
To every symptom that might raise
A hope of life's returning gaze.
Ah ! happy had the hope been vain,
And those eyes opened ne'er again !
From her deep swoon now slow she woke,
With trembling voice and 'wildered look
Faintly to those around she spoke :

"Where am I ? What was that I heard ?
Has not some dreadful thing occurred,

Or have I dreamt? My God! if true,
Thou must have, then, forsak'n me too;
Yet have I never ceased to pray
Through wakeful night and weary day,
While happier spirits slept,
In my lone chamber prostrate lay,
And bitter tears have wept.
When crushed by grief, of foes afraid,
I knelt to Thee, and hopeful prayed,
Thou would'st my cause befriend,
And trembling I besought Thy aid
To shield me from the vengeful blade,
Did I in aught offend?
But oh! forgive! Thy chast'ning rod
Meekly I kiss, my Judge, my God;
To Thee this issue seemeth best,
I bow to Thy Divine behest;
Teach me my crushing ills to bear,
Deny me not a Father's care;

Father or friend but Thee I've none,
Oh! shield me, I am all alone!"

Scarce had her lips breathed forth that prayer,
When suddenly the torch's glare
Flashed 'gainst the panes a ruddy light,
While 'cross the yard a steel-clad knight,
His mail and helm no longer bright,
Tarnished with dust and gore,
With a strong guard behind was seen,
Hast'ning to where the trembling Queen—
Her deathlike faintness o'er—
Ready to meet her gloomy fate,
In silent terror meekly sate,
'Mid life around so still, so lone,
So fixed the vacant stare;
She sat as if in sculptured stone,
A statue of despair.
But who the odious miscreant
That let those guards within?

A minion by Satan sent,
For vilest treachery only meant,
In hope to avert his dreaded fate,
A traitor, had unbarred the gate.
Though, ere the foe should win,
A gallant band stood ready there
The last extremity to dare,
Prepared in ruins to bury all,
Ere in the tyrant's hands should fall
Their loved and helpless Queen.

With rapid step her chamber gained
The guards, their weapons darkly stained,
And hearts by grief and pain unmanned,
Before the trembling prisoner stand.
They came to do the tyrant's will;
But they were men—had feeling still,
And warriors truly brave ne'er feel
To blameless suffering dead.

While loud the attendants round her sobb'd,
Their manly hearts with pity throbb'd,
And silent anguish bled.

Soon as the chief had calmness gained,
In brief but gentle terms he explained
His royal master's stern decree,
"That he should hasten instantly,
The strong Alcazar towers to gain,
And force an entrance, if in vain
All other means should prove;
But though he fully came prepared,
This dread alternative was spared,
Wisely the rebels had preferred
To gain their Sovereign's love;
For blood enough had flowed that day
To wipe a nation's sins away,
And heart of stone to move.
His further orders were—this done,

He should admission give to none,
But guard the fortress well;
The attendants of the Queen remove,
Save three of whom he might approve,
And every foe expel.
And that upon the second day
He should her Majesty convey
To Sigüenza's tower,
Where for a time she would be confined
In safety, till the King could find
A fortress more secure."

"Alas! I am indeed sunk low,
Crushed beneath ev'ry ill,
But for the sympathy you show
My heart is grateful still.
Of all I loved I'm now deprived,
Bereft of friends and power,
Why has my broken heart outlived
This desolating hour?

Where are the brave who strove to shield ?
Where now my faithful band ?
Their lifeless hands no more shall wield
For me the shield or brand.

" But rest, calm spirits, from your strife :
Tho' o'er your fate I weep,
I would not call you back to life,
Or wake you from your sleep.
All mangled tho' your breasts may be,
They throb nor suffer now,
Or feel the fires of agony
That scorch this living brow.

" Your prisoner, Sir, I now submit,
And know I must obey
Whate'er your pleasure shall think fit,
But oh ! be gentle, pray !
Bear with me if at times not well,
I sorrowful appear,

O'er passing thoughts the chest will swell,
The eye still drop a tear.
I was not always so forlorn
As now I'm doomed to be,
Dear friends from whom by fate I'm torn
All loved me tenderly.
From their sweet lips I never heard
A thought, a tone unkind ;
A manner harsh, a bitter word,
Would crush this hapless mind.
The heart that never grief had known,
Nor sorrow felt as yet,
When tranquil days and joys are gone,
And hopes like idle dreams have flown,
Can it the past forget ?
Then oh ! indulgent to me be,
Compassionate my woes ;
There dwells One in eternity
From whom all mercy flows ;

From His dread eye is nought concealed,
Your goodness He will see,
And when on earth my doom is sealed,
Your recompense will be."

In vain the leader of that band [47]
Struggled his feelings to command,
In vain he tried to speak;
The more he strove to calm appear,
The faster did the burning tear
Roll down his manly cheek.
Nor in that chamber sad, I ween,
Was there that night a dry eye seen
When, gazing on that youthful Queen,
Her pallid cheek and lowly mien,
They heard that mournful prayer;
Heart-rending was her look and tone,
Spirit so broken, and so lone,
So crushed 'neath dark despair.

At length, though pausing oft, he said :
"In camps from boyhood early bred,
Of war's dire ills I've had my share,
And hard, God knows, they are to bear,
But 'tis the warrior's fate ;
O'er the red field and carnage drear
He mourns, but mourns too late.
E'en with the laurel round his head,
And flushed by victory's cheer,
Not in that hour is he repaid
For all his heart must bear,
When gazing on the faces dead
Of friends in life so dear.
In many a battle have I been,
Its direst horrors have I seen,
'Mid ghastly carnage round ;
But never saw I such a day—
God grant again I never may !—
When wounded on the ground

Brave men were butchered where they lay,
Nor woman mercy found.
Too oft 'neath this keen scimitar
Hath flowed the precious blood,
And oft amid the din of war
I've o'er the captive stood;
But never have I stood o'er one
So young, so helpless, and so lone,
By sorrow so subdued;
Nor ever felt till this sad hour
Such anguish in my heart,
Or ever lacked till now the power
To act a soldier's part.
But if in that which I *must* do
I harsh at times appear to you,
You will not blame, but pardon me
For the deep pain I give,
Not mine the pitiless decree
That robs you of your liberty.
But earnest I will strive

To do the utmost that I dare
The anguish of your heart to spare,
And mitigate your woes;
While He who sends us all our share,
Yet listens to the captive's prayer,
Will shield you from your foes."

"Most noble knight, I deeply feel
The goodness of your heart,
Such lofty natures never fail
To act a generous part;
May God, whose bounty all can give,
Grant me this fervent prayer,
That long as I'm allowed to live
I know your gentle care.
Obedient to the King's command,
I to my prison go,
In my lone cell in prayer I'll bend,
My only solace now."

Time passed ; in the dark tower confined,
The lonely captive silent pined.
The tyrant's guilty breast, afraid
She might again his grasp evade,
To Xerez dungeon had conveyed
The hapless victim ; there immured,
He felt his destined prey secured. [48]

No friendly aid could reach her there,
To rescue her ; but few would dare
To make the attempt ; so strong the place,
Who'd risk the failure and disgrace ?
Her home, her country was afar,
Distracted with a desp'rate war ;
The truth 'twas easy to conceal,
Falsehood to tell more easy still.
What deed so black, what sin, what crime
That does not fade in lapse of time !
Who will gain entrance to that cell ?
The tragic deed whose tongue shall tell ?

The eye once closed in lasting sleep
No face will see—no watch can keep;
In the dark vault no human ear
The victim's dying shriek will hear;
The throbbing heart once still,
The living need no longer fear,
Lips mute no tale can tell.

Such secret thoughts, to none confessed,
Alternate soothed and fanned his breast.
And oft the tyrant's soul would dwell
On scenes his nature loved so well.
He knew her safe; when such his will,
One step would make her safer still.
It pleased his heart with hope awhile
His destined victim to beguile;
Should he at once her life destroy,
He robbed himself of half his joy.
The wildest animal that prowls,
The fierce hyæna, as he howls

With savage pleasure o'er his prey,
Delights not with suff'ring to play;[49]
He kills at once, the pain is o'er,
The victim sinks and writhes no more.
'Tis man alone, whom brutes obey,
Who tortures ere he kills his prey.
The gloomy cell, the prison drear,
Her youth and loneliness would cheer;
Required she aught to please the eye,
Above her grating shone the sky;
Should her lone heart at night feel sad,
The glimmering lamp would make it glad.
The balmy air, the sparkling stream,
The songster's note, the sun's glad beam,
The charm of converse with her kind—
The joys of friendship—wit refined—
The tones enchanting—flash of mind,
God's gracious gifts to man below—
Gifts that He made all hearts to know—

Denied to hapless Queens alone,
Who claim no love, and share no throne;
For friendless captives were not meant,
To prisons drear are never sent.
Banished from all, their names forgot,
Who mourns or feels their hapless lot,
Or cares their fate to know?
Will Pleasure's votary pause to read,
Or Happiness the sad tale heed
Of suffering and woe?
Can human lip or pen avail
To make the joyful spirit feel
The pangs from grief that flow?
Does Wealth, beyond the passing hour,
Care to use her heavenly power,
Her precious treasure spare;
Quit splendour and the blaze of light,
To seek amid the gloom of night
The refuge of despair?

Of every earthly joy bereft,
To linger day by day,
Their solitary pleasure left
To wake, to weep, and pray

That when, by their Maker's kind decree,
From this dark scene they are taken,
Their joyous souls, from suffering free,
On heaven's bright shore might waken.

Where welcomed, mid the glorious light,
By dear ones gone before,
All meet in transports of delight,
Embrace, and part no more.

And ofttimes in the dead of night,
When all around was still,
When from the silent orb of light
A pensive radiance fell,

From that lone cell in turret drear
The melancholy note

Was heard, now soft, now trilling clear
Through the calm air to float,

Sad as the solitary bird
From nest in wild-wood torn,
When safely caged is plaintive heard
Its hapless fate to mourn :

" Oh, France, beloved France, shall these
weeping eyes never
Gaze on thy hills and green valleys again ?
Immured in this cell must I languish for ever,
Longing to see thee, but longing in vain ?

" My dear native land, in vain would I banish
Bright scenes that each hour in memory start,
Scenes that, when all in the gloom of night
vanish,
In dreams come to gladden my desolate
heart!

" Oh, France, noble France, 'mid the blaze of thy
glory,
In the page where thy fame for ever shall live,
Oh, spare a brief line to tell my sad story,
To my dark hapless fate a passing thought give!

" Let not my own country a daughter forget,
Lured from her home in a prison to die,
With no voice to lament, not a tear of regret,
O'er the grave where, friendless and lone, I
shall lie!"

The hour arrived, he has decreed
Her guiltless bosom is to bleed;
Assassins never reasons give,
It was enough " she must not live."

To perpetrate the scheme from hell,
Where can he hope the friend to find,
One who the deed will *never* tell,
Hand daring with Satanic mind?

The fatal order he has giv'n,
The victim must prepare for heav'n.
To whom did he that order give?
To one whose name will ever live—

Will live when monarchs with the power,
The pomp they wielded for an hour,
Shall be no more; their names forgot,
Their deeds, their lives remembered not;
Will live when all the vain parade
Of titled names their lips have made
Unknown shall in the tomb be laid;
The column tall to mark the grave,
The laboured epitaph to save
Their memories, the marble bust,
Sunk in the universal dust,
Shall all in turn be swept away,
Yet shall he live, though not this lay
His fame perpetuates a day;

But in that line he still shall live
Which immortality can give;
The glowing page, the deathless song,
His honoured mem'ry shall prolong.

Iñigo Ortiz startling heard,
Nor would believe the fatal word;
But when the imperious order came
A second time that crime to name,
His noble nature scorned to be
The instrument of villainy.
The bribe with bitter scoff he spurned,
His soul with indignation burned.
To him who brought the King's decree,
Starting, he cried, "Attend to me!
Go tell the proud tyrannic King
In vain his gold accursed you bring!
Consent from me he'll *never* wring.
Tell him with scorn that if to me
He could the offer make to be

Lord of an empire's wide domain,
O'er countless tribes and slaves to reign;
And if to this could add the gold
That all the mines of Peru hold—
Not that or treble that would make
Ortiz his hapless Queen forsake,
And from the dark assassin's knife
He'll perish to preserve her life.
His bribes and threats I can defy,
No villain's ready tool am I;
A soldier's duty I can do,
In open warfare meet my foe.
By hellish drugs or secret knife
The soldier takes not human life;
The blood he sheds is in the camp,
Not the lone cell 'neath midnight lamp.
To him who sent you hither go,
This answer let him promptly know.
But if his soul, still bent on ill,
Must a lone, helpless woman kill,

And his *brave* heart and *noble* mind
On earth no friendly hand can find,
Tell him the fiend to strike the blow
Dwells in a murkier clime,
'Mid sulphury vapours' lurid glow,
Stirring the embers hot below,
Watching through endless time,
Restless, and flitting to and fro,
Waiting the master's work to do,
Ready for any crime;
The never-ending work of him
Who, 'mid the blue flames, flick'ring dim,
In sombre grandeur reigns,
And to bring down the countless host
Of souls from earth that heav'n have lost,
A mighty force maintains;
There lurks guilt's obsequious mind,
The open palm he *there* will find,
There take his bribes; but not again
Attempt with crime my soul to stain.

And let such instruments beware
How the All-seeing One they dare;
A day of vengeance yet will come,
Though lips now bribed by gold are dumb."

With with'ring scorn he turned away,
No more his quiv'ring lips could say,
And anxious went to seek for her,
His solitary prisoner.
Too well he knew her doom was sealed,
No human aid could longer shield
That victim from the fatal blow;
But an indignant world should know
That to his fated, friendless Queen
He to the last had faithful been,
Could e'en a tyrant's vengeance brave
Her persecuted life to save.[50]

His own destruction he knew well
Must follow soon. Within her cell

He found the captive kneeling there,
Her fond attendant by the chair
Listening to the solemn prayer.
He paused till ceased the mournful tone;
Her solitary duty done,
She calmly rose; the vacant eye
Told that her thoughts were still on high.
She gazed, but knew not who stood there,
So long, so listless did she stare.
Approaching near he mildly said,
"My gracious Queen, I am afraid
That I intrude, but you 'll forgive
When brief my reasons I shall give."

That well-known voice, when thus he spoke,
At once her consciousness awoke.

"Ortiz, my kind, my noble friend,
When did your presence e'er offend

Your hapless Queen? too glad is she
Your welcome countenance to see,
But, worn with ceaseless grief and pain,
At times I find my wand'ring brain
Doth scarce sweet memory retain.

"Yet hard I strive my fate to bear;
I bend and seek for strength in prayer,
Still darker grows my deep despair.
But wherefore do you look so sad?
Have you another woe to add
To the overwhelming load?
Your look and manner both forebode
Some evil I should dread to know,
Could this seared heart dread aught below."
The agitated voice betrayed
His deep emotion as he said:
"My honoured but ill-fated Queen,
Would to God you had never seen
The sky that weeps o'er bleeding Spain,

Where surely God, for some dark crime
That stains this grief-doomed land,
Hath in His anger for a time
Withdrawn His shelt'ring hand,
And for punishment given o'er
To the desolating power
Of a dread tyrant's stern decrees
Her homes, her peace and liberties.
But out of ill we grateful know
His mercy causeth good to flow,
The darkness of the darkest night
Must silent vanish all away
Before the rays of dazzling light
From the glorious orb of day.

" Our ruler, whose despotic will,
Alas ! the proudest must fulfil,
Commands me instantly to leave,
And my authority to give

To one not named whom he shall forthwith
send;
Honest services must his mind offend
Whose schemes and deeds of darkness never
end.

"O'er my own loss I scorn to grieve,
But thus to be compelled to leave
My unprotected prisoner——"

"Ortiz, no longer grieve for her;
She knows the destined hour draws near—
Source of bright hope to her, not fear;
She knows that when that hour shall come
She leaves a prison for a home—
A home where weary she may rest,
By joy consoled, not grief distressed.
In this cold world what has she left,
Of all that makes life dear bereft?

"What sorrow have I not endured,
What anguish silent borne,
From my own land by treachery lured,
From home and dear ones torn,
Where pure affection's heavenly glow
Sparkled in every eye,
Beloved by all I cared to know,
With whom I hoped to die;
From them and their bright faces brought,
Never to see again,
My heart by hopes delusive caught
To find—a *grave* in Spain!

"Nature's strong ties asunder riven,
Deprived of all, to madness driven;
Mocked with the shadow of a throne
And name of bride—left all alone—
E'en hope, the heart's last solace, gone!
Dragged to a prison's gloomy vault,
Unconscious of a crime or fault;

In dreary solitude confined
For years, without a cause assigned,
Nought left but wretched life alone,
Health lost and reason well-nigh gone—
Good Ortiz! what on earth have I
To wish for, but in peace to die?
I am no longer now what I have been,
In all am changed; what fondly cherished
scene,
What hope that hath not vanished, frozen,
chilled?
Scarce throbs the pulse that once so wildly
thrilled!

"To reconcile me to my end,
The last who dared this heart befriend
Is now removed; the cause for this,
Alas! I can too plainly guess.
But ere you shall for ever go,
Tell me—for much I long to know—

The fate of those who were to me
True friends in my adversity—
Good Leonora, and the brave
Don Henrique!"

"Alas! the grave
Containeth one. No hand could save
That noble heart and honoured life
From him who wields the assassin's knife.
No other victim being at hand
To glut the tyrant's murd'rous brand,
On her his rage unholy fell;
Cold lies the form all loved so well.
But not the despot's stern command,
Or threats or gold, could bribe a hand
In Spain to do the accursed deed;
A swarthy son of Afric's breed
Alone the infernal sin would dare—
The rest your gentle ears I'll spare." [51]

"O God! was such her frightful end!
And what to me does it portend?
My tender Leonora gone,
Thus am I more and more alone.
Yet why for her should I thus grieve?
Must I not soon prepare to leave,
And shall we not then meet again
In realms where neither grief nor pain
Will lacerate the joyous heart,
And where again we never part!"

"The other friend whom you did name,
The noble Count, is still the same!
His daring nature nought can tame.
Impetuous as the torrent wild
Rushing from mountain steep,
Untiring as the ocean wild
Whose surges never sleep.
After that dark disastrous night,
His bravest comrades gone,

When treachery compelled his flight,
And every hope had flown,
With bitter thoughts his gory brand
Deep plunging in the virgin sand
The blessèd Cross he drew;
That Cross on which a Saviour bled,
Where lowly drooped His dying head,
His flesh with nails pierced through,
The agonizing pain still bore,
The pale brow calm, though streaked with gore,
Cheeks stained with blood and tears;
Yet that Saviour rose again,
In greater power above to reign,
And crown of glory wears.
By that dark but precious gore,
By that blessèd Cross he swore,
The strife he never would give o'er,
While life and strength remained,
Till in the battle hand to hand

He had felled the despot with his brand,
And final victory gained;
His flag again in triumph waved,
His hapless Queen and country saved.
But oft his weary spirit sighed,
While all his efforts fate defied;
Though ever restless still he toiled,
Still some dark power his labour foiled.
The base attempt by Edward made
The peaceful realm of France to invade,
Her glorious crown by force to gain
O'er patriots crushed in hopes to reign,
O'erwhelmed your nation with despair
And ruin hopeless to repair.
The fatal issue of the day [52]
At Poitiers, when the proud array
Of Gaul's renowned and bravest knights
Fell fighting for their country's rights—
And thousands bleeding freely gave
Their lives—a king beloved to save,

Yet vainly bled—saved but to live
Heart-broken—proud Edward's captive.
Closed for awhile all chance and hope
That Henrique could successful cope
Against the tyrant's fatal power.
But when arrived the longed-for hour
That gave to France her king again,
Released from England's galling chain,
Bright hope revived once more in all
That Spain would see the tyrant's fall,
And that her sons could save, though late,
Their Queen from her disastrous fate.
All hearts beat high when overhead
Again they saw that banner spread,
Beneath whose folds so oft the brave
Had fought and bled their land to save;
All felt that it was Heaven's decree
Don Henrique's sword should one day free
Their country from this scourge of hell.
His ranks the ready thousands swell:

From your own loved and glorious land
Du Guesclin led a chosen band.
Every arm against him turned,
With rancour fierce each bosom burned,
Fired by revenge and burning hate
His power to annihilate.
Alarmed the hated tyrant fled,
And sought from England's monarch aid ;
But for that hope his fate was sealed,
His courage and his arms had failed.
That aid a ruthless despot saved,
Spain and her noble sons enslaved.
But thus it pleased the Almighty God
To stay once more the avenging rod.
From England's shore great Edward's son
A mighty force himself led on.
On lone Moncayo's peak the day [58]
Had dawned, when, marshalled for the fray
The hostile ranks in stern array

Met on Navaretta's plain ;[54]
There sunk thy hopes, ill-fated Spain !

"Not Henrique's valour, Guesclin's skill,[55]
Or knights the bravest in Castile,
With Gaul's best soldiers, could withstand
The charge of England's chivalry,
Led by the skill and conquering hand
Of England's Child of Victory.
Don Henrique nobly fought and bled,
Frantic—a desperate charge he led,
Broke through the approaching column's head,
Shattered the force and turned the tide,
Scattered the fragments far and wide—
Then, with his trumpet ringing far,
Dashed thro' the billows of the war.
On—on, 'mid wreck of arms, to where,
O'er glittering files 'mid dazzling glare
A glorious banner waved.

Tho' reeked the ground with carnage drear,
Tho' dark with arrowy clouds the air,
Death's ghastly storm he braved.
Left amid foes almost alone,
Half of his gallant band struck down,
His daring spirit still rushed on,
Still hoped the prize to gain;
Too late he saw the chance was gone,
His visionary hopes all flown,
'Gainst fate he fights in vain;
Warriors grim stood silent there,
Eyes flashing fire, and weapons bare
Prepared to guard it well;
And, while rung the clarions near,
He saw the black-mailed Prince appear,[56]
And lead his guards with thund'ring cheer
The onset to repel.
Driven back by the advancing host,
His slaughtered legions strewed the field,
His own proud banner down and lost,

His mightiest captain made to yield,[57]
He left the fatal scene. Night came,
Her silent step, her hour the same
As when upon a lonely world
Her shadowy wing she first unfurled,
And earth was fresh and fair;
Where 'neath calm sky like beauty pale,
Disdaining matchless charms to veil,
By nature faultless made,—
The beauteous Lily, white as snow,
Rejoiced her graceful form to show,
And heavenly gifts displayed,
While, opening slow and blushing red,
Heavy with dew her spangled head,
The rose such fragrant perfume shed,
'Mid odorous blossoms there,
As once for sinless man was spread
Through Eden's balmy air.

"On other scenes her gloomy pall
With mournful sigh she now let fall,
As if in pity spread;
The wail of sobbing winds swept by,
And fast from gath'ring clouds on high
Big drops like tears were shed
On heads that vainly shrieked for aid,
Pale lips that faint for mercy pray'd,
And, shrinking from the reeking blade,
In wild confusion fled,
Havoc by charging squadrons made,
And fields with slaughter red.

"Ever, since that disastrous hour,
Dark shadows on our country lower,
All light and hope in gloom obscured;
Bitter the wrongs she hath endured.
With Him the fate of all must be,
Whose word made all things that we
see.

But certain as to-morrow's sun shall rise,
Our prayer to heaven will ascend;
The God who hears a suff'ring nation's cries,
In His own time will succour send."

"Alas! fall'n Spain, is such thy fate?
Are all thy bright hopes desolate?
And must the doom that hangs o'er thee
For ever close all hope to me,
And seal my earthly destiny?
E'en so; I take the cup I am giv'n,
Nor murmur; 'tis the will of heav'n!
"Mysterious truly are Thy ways,
Great Ruler of our destinies;
In silence humbly must we bow
To that we understand not now;
The hour will come when Thou'lt reveal
To all the secrets of Thy will;
This complex scheme will then appear
Good, perfect, righteous, just, and clear.

"Time draws on, you cannot stay,
Yet hear what I would anxious say:
This meeting is on earth our last;
My spirit will ere long have pass'd
From all its trials here, and be
With Him who in eternity
Rules all the wondrous worlds we
see.
Ortiz, for all thy gentle care
A thankful captive wafts her prayer
To the Great Father of us all,
That when thy spirit He shall call
From this dark world of sin and woe,
His mercy will in heaven allow
The grateful there again to know,
And lasting gratitude to show
Kind friends once known on earth,
The good, the generous, the true,
The noblest, with the cherished few
Illustrious for their worth."

In silence at her feet he bends,
His heaving heart in vain contends
With nature's deep emotion, grief.
That grief which is beyond relief,
And such as they alone can feel
Who mute with anguish helpless kneel
Before the victims of such woe,
Now masters him ; his burning brow
Upon her gentle hand he pressed,
Faintly his lips her goodness blessed.
To that great Being above he silent pray'd,
In whose dread presence she must soon appear,
That He in mercy now would grant His aid,
And give her strength her coming fate to bear,
Then strove his bitter feelings to compose.
The effort vain—with throbbing head he rose,
In falt'ring voice breathed faint a last adieu,
And from that cell with hurried step withdrew,

Paused for one second ere he closed the door,
Gazed—turned—on earth he saw that form
no more.
Then burst that grief he could no longer quell
What power have words the pangs of grief to
tell!

Night came, and with that fatal night
Deep roaring came the tempest's might.
Without was darkness—doubly dark,
Save when the vivid lightning's fork
In rapid gleams of dazzling light
Flashed on the gazer's shrinking sight,
And struck the living dead;
While thunderbolts that crashing fell
Shook to the ground the citadel,
And rent the towers o'erhead.

The lurid sky with meteors gleamed,
Like war's artillery flashing,

Clouds met, and in dark masses seemed
On hostile masses rushing.

Flashed blinding fire, the thunder pealed,
The wind with the echo roaring,
Like shouting hosts on battle field
Volcanic trenches storming.

Lone, watching the terrific scene
Through the dark prison grating,
The captive knelt with trembling mien,
As if her doom awaiting.

Each flash that glanced from riven cloud
The pallid face revealing
Of one who thought she heard aloud
Heaven's last trumpet pealing.

Upon the wild and awful sky
In solemn silence gazing,

To that dread Power who rules on high,
Hands clasped, and eyes upraising.

While floating round her noble head,
Once bright in classic braiding,
Now tangled tresses careless spread,
Their lustrous beauty fading.

Rapt as in a blissful trance
O'er all her senses stealing,
She heeds no forkèd lightning glance,
Heeds not the thunder pealing.

Beyond the raging storm-clouds far,
And tempest distant roaring,
Above the elemental war
Her spirit calmly soaring.

To other scenes—that tranquil shore
Where souls in peace reposing,

No sunny fields are drenched with gore,
No graves o'er loved ones closing.

Where no tears dim the mother's eye,
No voice lost friends bewailing,
No sobbing orphan's piteous cry
Of anguish, unavailing.

What step was that she faintly heard?
Was that her door that sudden jarred?
She turned, then gave a piercing shriek,
While swift to her feet she sprung:
"O God!" she screamed, "who are you? speak!"
Aloud the vaulted ceiling rung.

He spoke not; but he nearer drew,
While round his searching glance he threw.
Again the shriek:—"In pity spare!"
No answer, but a savage stare.

By the pale lamp's glimmering ray
She could his features now survey;
No mask or shade the dark face screened—
She saw the aspect of a fiend;
Low swarthy brow, small eyes deep set,
Neck short, head flat, hair black as jet;
A smile around his thick lips played—
O God! the hell that smile conveyed!
His strong-set frame no armour wore,
In his coarse hands no arms he bore,
Save a short, thick, and heavy mace;
But the dark scowl, the callous face,
His silence, and the hour, the place,
All told too plain the dark intent
On which he came, and by whom sent.
A stupor every sense came o'er,
She saw distinctly nothing more;
Slow seemed to heave and sink the floor.
With trembling voice she faintly said,
"'Tis innocent, not guilty blood you'll shed;

Have you no pity? has your soul no dread?
Who are you? say, who sent you here?"
His lip slow curling with a sneer,
Replied, "Who am I? thy best friend,
Who comes in charity, to send
Thy soul to heaven. Dost thou ask
Who gave to me the grateful task?
'Tis one thou once didst joyous know,
Whose tender heart still loves thee so,
That he's resolved with all due haste
Thou shalt the joys of heaven taste;
So for thy journey quick prepare,
I've neither time nor words to spare."

"Great God!" she cried, as on the floor
She sank, "the God whom I adore,
Receive the hapless soul of one
Who trembling comes before Thy throne!
Forgive, Almighty Judge, forgive
The errors of my life; receive

My spirit in Thy realms of light,
From this dark world it takes its flight.
But Thou art good, and just, and mild,
Thou'lt not reject an erring child,
Great Father, nor refuse me here
The strength I need this night to bear
The last of all my earthly woes!"
She ceased; tranquil and slow she rose.
Her heavenly Father heard, and gave
The strength she asked. Before the slave
She stood erect, her fears were gone,
Her dread of earthly tyrants flown;
She stood there unprotected, lone,
Yet firm her voice and calm her eye:
"Strike! I am prepared to die."
A flash of the electric light
Burst in the cell, and shone so bright
Upon the pallid face, inspired,
The assassin back apace retired;

With horror struck, he stood amazed,
Terrified on the figure gazed;
Gone was the sneer and savage look;
His frame a sudden tremor shook,
She breathing soft stood calmly there,
No strength had he the deed to dare.
The arm though raised fell quick again;
Once more the attempt he made—in vain;
The stillness and the placid form
More awed him than the rushing storm.
He paused; the flash and stunning peal
His fainting heart again might steel.
It came, and with the crashing roar
He struck—she's silent on the floor!
Deep flushed her brow, upheaved the chest, then fell,
Drooped the hot lid, pulse ceased, and all was still!
Dim grew that eye which erst so bright had shone,
A rayless orb—the living light was gone![58]

Her spirit pure calm wing'd its way to realms
where angels dwell,
The pallid and forsaken clay sleeps in the lonely
cell!

I.

REST—rest hapless spirit, your sufferings ended,
Earth's tyrants can torture your bosom no more;
Fear not that the world, though you died unbefriended,
Your tragical fate will e'er cease to deplore.

II.

Fear not that thy country, though helpless to save thee,
Thy name or thy sorrows will ever forget;
Or, recalling *his* name to whose vile heart they gave thee,
Will e'er cease to shed bitter tears of regret.

III.

Rest, calm, blessèd spirit, no more art thou friendless,
In Christ's living presence with gratitude kneel,
Through Paradise roaming in happiness endless,
Near Him who for sorrow could sympathy feel.

IV.

Himself once on earth mortal agony bearing,
Torture the keenest human nature can know,
Now reigning in bliss the bright crown is wearing,
By the Great Father placed on His radiant brow.

V.

'Mid purified spirits, no longer enduring
The ills of a world where the wicked prevail,

O'er wrongs undeservèd not now art thou
mourning,
The base *never there* the pure can assail.

VI.

Though feeble the pen that thy tale hath
recorded,
Though crushed the worn spirit 'neath sorrow
and pain,
For the task and labour his heart is rewarded
If thy name and mem'ry he hath cleared from
all stain.

VII.

If rescued from cynics, the flippant and heart-
less,
Who truth, virtue, justice, and honour de-
spise,

And can see vice lurk in the pure and the
artless,
That the sight of the candid and honest defies.

VIII.

Who, a talent for wit and satire attaining,
Rejoice to plant deep the keen darts they can
throw,
Regardless alike whether pleasing or paining,
So long as the flash makes the loud laughter
flow.

IX.

"Who, without sin" themselves, 'mid sinners
walk blameless,
Never name but *in whispers* guilt's pitiful tale,
And, affecting to scorn the vile and the shameless,
Conceal their own shame 'neath the hypocrite's
veil.

X.

Though o'er thy lone grave no pale mourner attending,
No sob broke the silence, no lid dropped a tear,
Oft—oft from eyes pensive o'er these pages bending
Will gush the hot drops to thy memory dear.

NOTES TO
BLANCHE, QUEEN OF CASTILE.

[1] Valladolid, once the capital and most flourishing city in Castile, containing a population of more than 50,000, is now a neglected town. The removal of the Court to Madrid first led to the decay of this ancient city, and subsequent events have completed its ruin.

There is now scarcely a vestige left of those treasures of art that once adorned the city. The frequent fogs that arise from the waters of the Pisuerga render it cold and damp in winter. The observation of Lud. Nonius still applies to it,—"Aëre saluberrimo nisi interdum obscuris Pisuergæ amnis nebulis fœdaretur."

[2] Aimeri, Viscount of Narbonne, a distinguished French knight: his name appears frequently among those who fought bravely in defence of their country against the invasion of Edward III. and the Black Prince.

[3] The cross worn by the Crusaders.

[4] Blanche of Bourbon, daughter of the Duke of Bourbon, and niece of John, King of France, betrothed at the age of fifteen to Don Pedro, A.D. 1352. "Le contrat de

mariage de Blanche existe aux archives du royaume daté de Paris, 2 Juillet, 1352. Il est signé par les deux ambassadeurs castillans, Don Juan Sanchez de las Roclas, jadis évêque de Séville, évêque élu de Burgos, et par Don Alva Garcia d'Albornoz."—*Hist. de Don Pèdre, Mérimée*, 121, n.; *Romey, Hist. d'Espagne*, tom. viii., 258.

[5] Germany was famous, during the middle ages, for the skill of her armourers. Sir Walter Scott, in a note to *Marmion*, mentions the story told by Froissart of the Earl of Derby sending to Sir Galeas, duke of Milan, for his armour. But Froissart also adds, that "the earl marshal sent into Germany for his armour—each providing himself most magnificently, to outshine the other." —*Johnes' Froissart*, vol. ii., 662.

[6] The hauberk was a coat of chain armour, that had its hood of the same piece, and which only persons of a certain estate were permitted to wear.

[7] Bordeaux was famous at this period for the manufacture of steel lances. Froissart mentions that the knights, at a great tournament performed before the Earl of Buckingham, at Cannes, were well provided with lances of good steel from Bordeaux.—*Ibid.*, vol. i., 630.

[8] It was about three years before the events described in this poem, 1353, that armour had become so exceedingly splendid. The ancient breastplate or gorget was very large, and extended to the body and limbs of the warrior.—*Meyrick.*

[9] Leonora, queen of Aragon, sister of Don Alfonso XI.

[10] La Sagra. The rich district between Illescas and Aranjuez. Arabicè, "the open country, the support." Others read in it the Hebrew Sahar, bright- as being the east gate, on which the rising sun would shine, and through which those who went out early would pass.—*Ford's Spain*, 483.

[11] According to Silva, some Jews established themselves where Toledo now stands, B.C. 540, and called the city Toledoth, which signifies "Mother of the people." From the Romans it passed under the dominion of the Goths. Leovigild resided there, and his successors embellished the city. The Moors took it from the Goths in 714, and held it until the year 1085, when Alfonso VI., king of Castile, recovered it, and styled himself emperor, whence it took the title of "Imperial Toledo." Two centuries ago, the city contained more than 200,000 inhabitants; it does not now number 20,000. It is built upon lofty rocks, in a commanding situation, 2,500 feet above the sea, on the right bank of the Tagus, which surrounds it on all sides, except to the north. The river, which from Aranjuez flows so smoothly, that it is with difficulty the eye distinguishes its course, as it approaches Toledo, and under the walls of that city, is heard from afar roaring over an uneven bed through the rent in the granite mountain.—*Bourgoanne's Spain*, vol. ii.

[12] I may have appeared to draw the character of this king in darker colours than he deserved, but an attentive perusal of the historians of the period must satisfy any

one that there is no exaggeration in the character I have attempted. His powers of dissimulation could hardly be outdone. "Fuit enim ingenio velox, astutus, et affabilis, in persuadendo promptus et dulcis."—*Hist. Hisp., Rod. Santius*, lib. iv.

"Petrus Castellæ rex Saracenicos mores in effusa libidinum licentia imitatus."—*Raynaldus.*

"Il serait difficile d'imaginer un homme livré à de plus grossières passions, et d'une brutalité plus égoïste, que ce prétendu roi Chrétien, en qui la soif du sang et des plaisirs sensuels était devenue un besoin. Froid, astucieux, dissimulé, meurtrier, il cachait sous un extérieur fier et inexorable et le masque de la sévérité, les plus bas entrainemens des sens, et de la matière, et un goût effréné des plus viles jouissances."—*Romey, Hist. d'Espagne*, tom. viii.

"If one-half the deeds narrated by the chronicler, Peter Lopez de Ayala, were actually perpetrated by him, he has had but one equal in ferocity, and that one was the Czar, Ivan the Fourth, of Russia."—*Dunham's Hist. Spain*, vol. ii., 231.

[18] Doña Maria de Padilla, mistress of Don Pedro, was of an illustrious family attached to the house of Lara, and ruined during the civil wars that distracted her unhappy country. Left at an early age an orphan, she became attached to the service of Doña Isabel de Meneses, wife of Albuquerque. This unprincipled minister planned and effected her ruin, to gratify his own vile ends; having placed her in the way of Don Pedro, that prince be-

came enamoured of her. She possessed great personal attractions and most amiable disposition.

"Muy fermosa, é de buen entendimiento, é pequeña de cuerpo."—*Ayala.*

"Rappelons encore que ses ennemis mêmes n'ont pu se refuser à vanter sa douceur. Favorite, on ne lui reprocha jamais d'avoir abusé de son ascendant pour faire le mal; souvent elle réussit à calmer les transports furieux de son amant, et l'on ne cite pas un seul trait de sa vengeance contre les rivales éphemères que lui donna souvent l'inconstance de Don Pèdre."—*Hist. de Don Pèdre, Mérimée,* 349.

She did not long survive the unfortunate Blanche, having died the same summer, 1361, at Seville.—*Ayala,* 77. "La maison de Padilla est mentionné dans un privilége daté de 1033."—*Hist. de Don Pèdre, Mérimée,* 109.

Don Pedro after her death publicly declared that he had married her, and some authors have accepted his statement as true; but the learned historian of his life has proved it to be utterly false.—*Ibid,* 356.

[14] Valladolid was called by the Moors Belad-Walid—the city or "land of Walid." El Waléed I., under whose Kalifate Spain was conquered.—*Ford's Spain,* 334.

[15] Mention is made of lace being of very delicate texture in France and Flanders as early as 1320.—*Haydn.*

[16] "Elam" was formerly the name of that territory now known as Persia, the present ruler of which empire

has a single pearl in his possession valued at one hundred and ten thousand pounds.—*Haydn.*

[17] Don Henrique, Count of Trastamara, was the eldest son of Alfonso XI., by the beautiful Doña Leonara de Guzman, a daughter of one of the most illustrious families in Spain. On the accession of Don Pedro to the throne of Castile, his first act was to imprison the unfortunate Leonora, and, aided by his own mother, Doña Maria of Portugal, he soon afterwards caused her to be murdered. Don Henrique escaped a similar fate by fleeing from the capital.—*Hist. de Don Pèdre, Mérimée*, 56.

On the occasion of the approaching marriage, a reconciliation had taken place between Don Pedro and Don Henrique and his brothers, and hence their appearance at the ceremony, which took place with great splendour on the 3rd June, 1353.

"Don Henrique, Comte de Trastamare, est presque toujours ainsi désigné. Il signe moi le comte. Il était alors en effet le seul comte en Castile."—*Mérimée*, 165.

[18] Valladolid contained some of the finest specimens of Gothic architecture in the world.—*Ford's Spain*, 336.

[19] The horsemen who first encounter the bull: formerly the highest nobility took part in this exercise.

[20] The bandarilla, a kind of arrow with a small flag, which is stuck by the banderilleros into the neck of the animal to increase his fury.

The matadores, who kill the bull when he is sufficiently exhausted by his other tormentors.

[21] A game to which the common people are still attached; it is called El juego de la barra.

[22] After dinner the Spaniards take a short sleep, called the siesta.

[23] The Bishop of Segovia, who, to his honour, braved the odium of the tyrant to befriend the unhappy queen.

[24] "L'évêque de Ségovie demanda pour elle la permission d'entrer dans la cathédrale, afin d'y prier devant la fameuse pierre qui conserve l'empreinte du pied de la Vierge, objet de vénération pour tout l'Espagne."—*Hist. de Don Pèdre, Mérimée*, 158; *Romey, Hist. d'Espagne*, tom. viii. 351.

[25] The Patio was the open square court in Moorish houses; marble pillars supported the corridors on each side; a fountain played in the centre. In summer this court was covered with an awning, and occupied as a room, on account of its coolness.

[26] The Alcazar was both a palace and fortress. Outside, these buildings were remarkable only for the strength and severe simplicity of their architecture. The interior was of the most gorgeous and voluptuous character. The Alcazar of Toledo had once been the habitation of the Gothic kings; it was considerably enlarged by Alfonso VI., and almost entirely rebuilt under Charles V. It was destroyed by fire in the war at the beginning of the last century; the only remains were the fronts and the principal court, surrounded with arcades, which led to a magnificent staircase. Cardinal Lorenzana has had

portions of it repaired and arranged for the reception of silk looms. This great and good man devoted his life and fortune to instructing and improving the condition of the poor.—See *Bourgoanne's Spain*, vol. ii.

[27] The elegant pillars, of which the palm-tree was the type, deserve notice, and especially the variety of their capitals: these are in all cases carved in white marble; only the embellishments on the mouldings, which are now indicated by faint lines, are painted, the ground being blue, and the ornament the white surface of the marble; in some cases this order is reversed. Few of the capitals retain their colouring perfect; the ground is frequently red, with blue leaves on the upper surfaces; all the bands and inscriptions were in gold. The common inscriptions are, "And there is no conqueror but God," and "Blessing."—*Ford's Spain*, 134.

[28] "The colours employed by the Moors were in all cases the primitive—blue, red, and yellow (gold). The secondary colours—purple, green, and orange—only occurring in the Azulejo dados, which, being nearer the eye, formed a point of repose from the more brilliant colouring above. Some may now seem green; but this is the change effected by time on the metallic blue. The Catholic kings used both green and purple, and their work can easily be discovered by the coarseness of execution and the want of the harmonious balance of colours, which the Moors understood so much better."—*Ibid.*, 135.

[29] The rich Artesonado roof, gilded and starred like a heaven.

"The architecture of the Arabs," says Owen Jones, "is essentially religious, and the offspring of the Koran, as Gothic architecture is of the Bible; the prohibition to represent animal life caused them to seek for other means of decoration—inscriptions from the Koran, interwoven with geometrical ornaments, and flowers, not drawn decidedly from nature, but translated through the loom, for it would seem that the Arabs, in changing their wandering for a settled life, in striking the tent to plant it in a form more solid, have transferred the luxurious shawls and hangings of Cashmere, which had adorned their former dwellings, to their new; changing the tent-pole for a marble column, and the silken tissue for gilded plaster. With regard to the Arabic inscriptions, these epigrammata are written in an ornate character, and are decorations in themselves. Their usage was borrowed from the phylacteries, the preservative devices of the Jews."—*Ibid.*, 134.

[30] "My peace is with God; to Him have I attached myself; I have put my trust under His protection."

The above extract from the Koran is inscribed on the entrance to one of the principal halls in the Alhambra.

[31] Don Fadrique, the master of Santiago, and brother of Don Henrique, inhumanly murdered by Don Pedro.—*Hist. de Don Pèdre, Mérimée*, 256, and see note 58.

Don Tello, another brother of the same prince.

[32] The Guadarrama range separates the basins of the Tagus and the Duero.

There is now a road over these mountains, made by Ferdinand VI. in 1749. The bleak winds of both the Castiles produce an intensity of cold which the French never experienced in the winter campaigns of Friedland. "It was on Christmas Eve, 1808, that Bonaparte started from Madrid, having heard of Moore's advance. He led his army over these prison-caves of the storm and nurseries of death, like lightning amid glaciers; his own impatience was so great that he leaped off his horse and walked through the snows himself, in order to encourage his troops. He leaned on the arm of Savary, and arrived greatly exhausted at Espinar, where he slept. The losses suffered by his army were very great, yet the brave men pushed on. In spite of his exertions, however, Bonaparte reached Benavente just twelve hours too late."—See *Napier's Pen. War*, and *Ford's Spain.*

[33] Génétaires. Cavaliers armés à la légère. Le mot de génétaires est employé par Froissart.—*Hist. de Don Pèdre, Mérimée*, 195; *Johnes' Froissart*, vol. i., 368.

[34] These mountains were at that time covered with dark forests of pine, and infested with gangs of daring outlaws.

[35] The royal arms of Spain have from time to time undergone many changes, and those changes mark epochs.

The "canting" castle was first assumed for Castile, and the lion for Leon. The earliest shields were parted

per cross, gules, a castle or, argent a lion rampant, gules; or more properly purpure. In 1332, Alonzo XI. instituted the order of La Vanda, the "band" or scarf, the charge, a bend dexter, gules, issuing from two dragons' heads vert. This was discontinued in 1369, by Don Henrique, who hated an order of which his brother had deprived him.

"The colours of the flag of Spain are red and yellow, because Castile bears gules and or."—*Ford's Spain*, sect. 1, xv.

[86] See note [41].

[87] Quisarmes, a kind of offensive long-handled and long-headed weapon, or (as the Spanish visarma) a staff that hath within it two long spikes, which with a thrust forward come forth.—*Froissart*, i., 373, n.

[88] Ballesteros, men-at-arms, whose weapons were the crossbow, and a short mace or club. The pavisor was a large shield which stood upon the ground, and entirely screened the archer from head to foot.—*Ibid.*, 137.

[89] This is no poetical exaggeration: "La tour principale, n'ayant ni créneaux, ni parapets, ne pouvait protéger ses défenseurs contre les arbalétriers du roi, qui, en quelques instants, balayèrent la platéforme."—*Hist. de Don Pèdre, Mérimée*, 194.

[90] "Uraca," the name given to his charger, from the ill-fated Doña Uraca Osorio, who was *burnt alive* by Don Pedro for rejecting his addresses: a portion of her body becoming exposed by the flames consuming her dress,

her faithful attendant Leonora Davalos rushed into the fire and nobly perished in her efforts to conceal her beloved mistress. Both lie interred in the convent San Isidoro in Italica, near the remains of Guzman el Bueno.—*Ford's Spain*, 64.

[41] El Puente de Alcantara is a pleonasm, and signifies "The Bridge of the bridge."—See *Ford*, 272.

[42] Livy. For the particulars of the siege of Saguntum and its destruction, see *Livy*, lib. xxii.; and *Polybius*, lib. iii.

[43] Hannibal.

[44] The destruction of Numantia by the Roman general, Scipio Æmilianus, stands alone in the history of the world. The horrors of that siege so far exceed anything ever witnessed, that the monster who caused and stood by a calm spectator of them is justly regarded as an incarnation of the evil principle, and held up to the universal scorn and execration of mankind. The town was unprotected by walls or towers. Yet for fourteen years they defied the Roman power. Having consumed all their provisions, they ate the flesh of their dead comrades, then set fire to their houses and perished in the flames, leaving only ashes to the conqueror, 133 B.C.—See *Livy*, lib. lviii.

[45] "On égorgea tous les blessés que l'ennemi avait laissés dans les maisons. Au nombre des malheureux condamnés à mort se trouvait un orfèvre âgé de plus de quatre-vingts ans. Son fils se jeta aux pieds de Do

Pèdre en le suppliant de le faire mourir à la place de son père. S'il en faut croire Ayala, cet horrible échange aurait été accepté, et par le roi, et par le père lui-même." —*Hist. de Don Pèdre, Mérimée*, 196.

[46] This wonderful picture is in Lord Methuen's gallery at Corsham, and is worth going any distance to see. The works of this great artist are remarkable for their peculiar delicacy. But his performance was singularly slow. It is said that his brain was fatally affected by seeing Luca Giordano dispatch more business in four or five hours than he could have done in as many months.

[47] I have here supposed the unfortunate queen to be placed at once in the custody of the noble Iñigo Ortiz, though not historically correct, as she was shifted to two or three fortresses before being placed in her last and fatal one, under his care.

[48] Xeres is a Moorish city, situate upon the bank of the Guadalete. Antiquaries say it was the ancient Asta Regia. Near this city was fought the great battle between the Goths and Moors, in 712, that decided the fate of Spain. The environs produce the celebrated sherry-wine. The Moorish Alcazar is still to be seen here. It was in this prison, and not that of Medina Sidonia, as stated by some authors, that the unfortunate Blanche was confined and murdered.—See *Hist. d'Espagne, Romey*, tom. viii., *Mérimée*, 348.

[49] In a state of nature the lower animals destroy their victims instantly. It is only when domesticated that they are known to depart from this instinct.

[50] "This noble and generous man, on his refusing to execute the order sent to him, was immediately removed, and his place supplied by a simple arbalétrier of the guard, Juan Perez de Rebolledo."—*Ayala*, 328.

[51] "On dit qu'aucun Castillan n'ayant osé porter la main sur la sœur du roi Don Alphonse, des esclaves Africains furent chargés de lui donner la mort." —*Hist. de Don Pèdre, Mérimée*, 275.

[52] The decisive battle fought at Poitiers in 1356, between John, king of France, and Edward the Black Prince, which proved so fatal to the arms of France.

[53] Moncayo. Mons Caunus, the bleak sierra that divides the basins of the Ebro and Duero.

[54] The great battle of Navaretta, between Don Henrique and Edward the Black Prince, was not fought till six years after the death of the unfortunate queen, but as it was an event in which, had her life been spared, she would have felt the deepest interest, I have here supposed it to occur sooner.

The tyrant had become so odious that Don Henrique found little difficulty in driving him from his throne and kingdom. But, unfortunately for Spain, his cause was espoused by the illustrious Edward the Black Prince, who, ignorant of the real character of Don Pedro, undertook to replace him on his throne. Having marched an army into Navarre, and crossed the Ebro at Logrono, he drew up his forces near Navaretta, Don Pedro at the

head of his own army having joined him. From the following conversation, given by Froissart, between Don Henrique and Bertrand du Guesclin, the former must have commanded an army of nearly eighty thousand men that day.

"Sire, be assured that very shortly you must have a battle: from what I know of the prince, I am convinced that it must be so. I therefore advise you to look well to this business, to order and arrange your men in the best possible manner."

"Sir Bertrand," replied Don Henrique, "in God's name so it shall be. I have no dread of the prince's army, for I have three thousand barbed horses, which will be on our two wings, seven thousand warders (génétaires), and upwards of twenty thousand men-at-arms, the best that can be found in all Castile, Galicia, Portugal, Cordova, and Sicily, besides ten thousand crossbows, and full forty thousand foot, armed with lances, darts, swords, and all sorts of weapons, who have sworn to die rather than desert me. I trust, therefore, Sir Bertrand, that through God's grace, in whom I put my trust, we shall have the best of it, as well as from the justice of our right in this affair. I therefore entreat you all to be of good courage."

Don Henrique added, "By the soul of my father, I have such a desire to see this prince, and to try my strength with him, that we will never part without a battle."—*Johnes' Froissart*, vol. i., 366.

"Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife!
To all the sensual world proclaim

One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name."
SIR WALTER SCOTT.

[55] Du Guesclin, a distinguished French knight. "His correct name was Du Glay-aquin, being the direct issue from King Aquin, who reigned over Bugia and Barbary. He used to say that when he should have expelled Don Pedro from Spain, and crowned Don Henrique de Trastamara, he would go to Bugia, and demand his inheritance; and would undoubtedly have executed it, for Don Henrique would gladly have supplied him with men and ships; but the Prince of Wales, by bringing back and replacing Don Pedro on the throne of Castile, put an end to this scheme."—*Froissart*, vol. ii., 260.

[56] The Black Prince, seeing that his army had achieved a great victory, and that the enemy were fleeing from the field, inquired anxiously where Don Henrique was: "Est-il tué ou pris?" he exclaimed, on being told that he had left the field; "il n'y a rien de fait," he cried vehemently, words which proved to be quite true.—*Mérimée*, 505.

[57] Du Guesclin was made a prisoner by Sir John Chandos in the battle, and ransomed for one hundred thousand francs.—*Froissart*, vol. ii., 260.

The total loss sustained by Don Henrique's army amounted to 17,500.—*Ibid.*, 261.

[58] The manner in which the assassin perpetrated the dark deed is unknown, whether by violence or poison.

The way in which I have supposed it to occur is as probable as any ; it being the very same way that many of the tyrant's victims had perished ; in the case of Don Fadrique, the brother of Don Henrique, standing by himself to see that his orders were obeyed, and witnessing the death struggles of the murdered man.—See *Hist. de Don Pèdre, Mérimée*, 257.

Both Spanish and French authors extol the beauty, the sweetness, and the sanctity of this unhappy queen. "Muger bien fermosa . . . . blanca é ruvia, é de buen donayre, é de buen seso."—*Ayala, Cron. del rey Don Pèdro*, 1.

"On vantait partout sa beauté, sa douceur, sa grace naive."—*Hist. Don Pèdre, Mérimée*, 108.

"Ses geôliers, la voyant sans cesse en oraison, la regardaient comme une sainte, et la dépeignaient comme telle aux habitans du voisinage."—*Ibid.*, 352.

In the monastery of St. Francis, at Xerez de la Frontera, some years after her death, a monument was erected to her memory, supposed to be in the reign of Don Henrique with the following epitaph :—

Christo . Optimo . maximo . sacrum
Diva . Blanca . Hispaniarum . Regina
Patre . Borboneo . ex . inclyta . Francorum
Regum . prosapia . moribus . et
Corpore . venustissima . fuit . sed præ
valente . pellice . occubuit . jussu
Petri . mariti . crudelis . anno salutis
MCCCLXI . ætatis vero . suæ . XXV.

At a loss to account for the antipathy of the tyrant to a

princess endowed with such rare qualities, some modern writers have attempted to fix an odious calumny upon the character of this unfortunate queen.

"On a prétendu que Don Fadrique était un des ambassadeurs chargés de demander au roi de France la main de sa nièce, et que, pendant le voyage de Paris á Valladolid, Blanche aurait succombé aux séductions de son beaufrère." Voltaire, who was ever ready to malign the innocent and to excuse the guilty, has generously helped to propagate this gross accusation: "Dans ces troubles la femme de Don Pèdre mourut—elle avait été coupable." The assertion is as false as the inference is base. Don Fadrique was *not* one of the ambassadors sent to France on that occasion; he never quitted Spain during that period, nor ever saw the queen previous to her marriage. Voltaire has given no authority for his statement; and as she was married at the age of sixteen, thrown into prison before she was seventeen, and murdered before she was twenty-five, even his cynical mind felt it would be difficult to prove to the satisfaction of any one but himself, that the daughter of an illustrious line, and broken-hearted wife, could become a depraved woman, or that a spirit crushed by sorrow could give a thought to sin.—See *Romey, Hist. d'Espagne*, tom. viii., 315; *Hist. de Don Pèdre, Mérimée*, 121. See also note[3] to this poem, where the names are given of the ambassadors *who were* sent. Is there in the history of the world a more illustrious heroine than Joan of Arc? In the literature of Europe, is there anything more odious to be found than Voltaire's "Pucelle"?

The subsequent events of the reign of Don Pedro may not be known to all my readers.

After the decisive battle of Navaretta, Don Henrique retreated hastily through Aragon into France, where, having raised a small force of four hundred Bretons, he boldly invaded the territories of the Prince of Wales, entering the principality by Bigorre, and took by escalade a town called Bagnières, from whence he made irruptions and laid waste the country around. His forces gradually increasing, and the Prince of Wales having again quitted Spain, he set out with a considerable body of men-at-arms towards Aragon, the king of which country had a great affection for him: there he passed the winter, making active preparations for renewing the war against Don Pedro. Early in the following year, 1368, he again advanced into Castile. The principal cities immediately opened their gates, and the country rapidly returned to their allegiance to him, "he having," as they said, "always treated them kindly and never oppressed them." —*Froissart*, 385.

Du Guesclin again joined him with a numerous force, and together they hastened to meet Don Pedro, who had raised an army, according to Froissart, of forty thousand men, the king of Granada having sent a large force to his assistance. The hostile armies met near Montiel, when a fierce conflict took place. Don Pedro's army being nearly six to one, the battle was for some time severely contested, and, in the words of Froissart, "was very grand and horrible; the Moors and Portuguese fought valiantly. Don Pedro was in the midst, and

with intrepid courage fought so valiantly with his battle-axe, that scarcely any dared to come near him" (vol. i., 387); but his army was thrown into confusion, and he was compelled to flee to the castle of Montiel. The carnage was frightful.

Don Pedro was captured in attempting to escape from the castle at midnight. The accounts of his capture and death are too conflicting to enable us, at this distance of time, to know the exact truth. The story generally received is, that Du Guesclin betrayed him into the hands of Don Henrique—that he had listened favourably to proposals sent to him by Don Pedro, and had pledged his honour he would provide for the safety of the king, and that Don Pedro accordingly repaired to his tent at the hour appointed, when he was betrayed into the hands of Don Henrique; but Froissart makes no mention of this story, and the learned editor of that chronicler observes, "I cannot believe this, as avarice was not a vice of such gallant men." Certain it is that he was taken and led a prisoner into Henrique's presence, where he was instantly despatched. A violent struggle took place, according to Ayala, between Don Pedro and Don Henrique, when the latter drew his dagger and wounded Don Pedro in the face, and the count's followers then dispatched him. According to Froissart, the king being the strongest of the two, he succeeded in throwing Don Henrique under him, and placing his hand upon his poniard, would infallibly have killed him, if the Viscount de Rocaberti had not been present, who seized the king by the legs and turned him over, when Don Henrique

stabbed him to the heart.—*Ayala*, 556; *Froissart*, i., 389; *Hist. de Don Pèare*, 565.

Don Henrique succeeded to the throne. The Kings of France and Aragon, as well as the Duke of Anjou, were all rejoiced at the event of the war. He proved to be an able ruler, and dying in 1379, transmitted the crown to his son Juan I.

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